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# XLR8R

105  
MARCH  
2007

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## ED'S RANT MARCHING ON



Baltimore band Santa Dads performing live  
(Photo by Devon R.K. Deimler)

The old adage says that March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. If global warming keeps going at this rate, who knows how long this will be applicable, but it's true enough for this issue, which boasts some of independent music's most fiery personalities.

Cover star Sizzla Kalonji has one of the most beautifully imperfect voices in dancehall—indeed anywhere—and that only makes his lyrics hit that much harder. When he sings, whether about repatriation, love, or ghetto economics, you listen. Even a fan of the slackest dancehall like myself has to get behind a track like “Solid as A Rock”. In high notes pulled so taut they're close to snapping, Sizzla delivers an uplifting anthem about holding one's ground; it's powerful, whether or not you believe in Jah. I don't like all Sizzla's songs—hey, I don't like Jay-Z's or Biggie's songs to their mothers either—but he says more in a few boom tunes than most dancehall singjays say in a lifetime; to say that the new stars of conscious dancehall like Notorious and Fantan Mojah owe him a debt is an understatement. Following the release of his new album on Damon Dash's label (!), our resident reggae/dancehall fiend Ross Hogg caught up with Sizzla in Jamaica to find out how he plans to tackle the U.S. market... with love.

It is definitely not all love for El-P, but anger can also be a very cleansing emotion, as L.A.'s Scott Thill found out when he talked to the Brooklyn truth seeker. Just as it seems indie hip-hop is all juvenile humor and “true school” (more like snooze school) production techniques, Def Jux's king of pain is back, all soul-searching and serious stanzas. He gets personal in the interview and on the album, which is something real to chew on when winter's last storms are raging outside.

Of course it's possible to have a strong personality and *not* take things seriously. Just ask French rap's new saviors TTC. Modernizing Europe's tired b-boy stance, the crew delivers cheeky lyrics over beats that could easily find favor on house dancefloors, in Brazilian funk balls or bhangra dances... probably even strip clubs.

More fun this issue came from pictures Wildfire Wildfire sent through of off-the-hinges Baltimore warehouse parties. (Pogoing? Tiger and walrus costumes? You could almost smell the sweat and unwashed thrift store t-shirts through my Macbook.) And we really enjoyed talking to Minneapolis design house Burlesque, even when we had to harass them 20 times to get their shit in. Yes, we're good-natured like that.

There's a lot more we're proud of here, including killer production tips from engineering genius Paul Epworth, damn fine record reviews, and interesting info on the lost Wu-Tang MCs. But I guess I lied, because there really aren't any lambs in this magazine, only lions.

—Vivian Host, Editor

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Sizzla Kalonji shot on location in Jamaica by Martei Korley



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### NICK CHACONA

Producer, DJ, and industry slave Nick Chacona spends a lot of his time eating pizza—and the rest of it dealing with dance music. During the day you can find *XLR8R*'s house columnist toiling away at legendary NY record distributor Downtown 161; at night he plays musical chairs with his girlfriend in their home studio. Nick has released singles for the likes of Mood Music, Bearfunk, 2020 Vision, and his US home base, Hector Works.

[www.nickchacona.com](http://www.nickchacona.com)



### MARTEI KORLEY

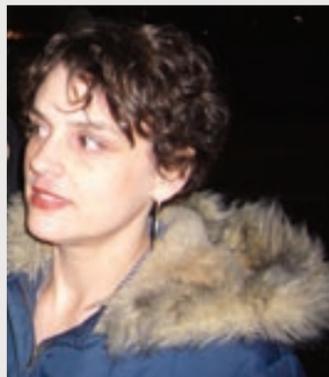
Martei Korley was born in Denmark of Danish-Ghanaian heritage, but he has called New York home for the past 14 years. Drawn to photography to support his musical pursuits, Korley quickly developed his creative expressions into a career. Having shot everyone from Donovan "Don Corleone" Bennett to Lee "Scratch" Perry, Korley has forged close relationships with Jamaica's best artists, and his shots of Sizzla in this issue only confirm his dedication to his ultra-personal craft. He is currently developing two books of his work.

[www.marteikorley.com](http://www.marteikorley.com)



### BASTIEN LATTANZIO

23-year-old Parisian Bastien Lattanzio is a self-taught photographer who is proud to say that everything he learned he "got from the streets." As for his love of the camera, he thanks a girl who broke his heart six years ago. "Sometimes photography can save you from depravity, alcohol, crack cocaine, and all that," he assesses. "Right now, my heart feels much better." His work can be seen in *Clark* and *Standard*, and the soon-to-be-launched French edition of *Vice*.



### KERRY MCLAUGHLIN

Kerry's background in private investigating, writing for *Barely Legal*, teaching art to developmentally disabled adults, and selling Norwegian dwarf metal and Appalachian dubstep to obsessive Aquarius Records mail-order customers translated perfectly to her new job as *XLR8R*'s Special Projects manager, where she spends her time wielding a clipboard and telling bands, labels, and film crews what to do for *XLR8R TV*. Off the clock, she plays two-chord hobbit rock and keeps it foolish.

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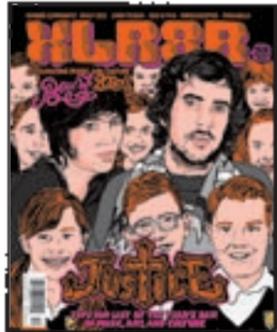
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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Like us? Hate us? Write us! Email letters to [letters@xlr8r.com](mailto:letters@xlr8r.com) or send mail to XLR8R Magazine 1388 Haight Street #105 San Francisco, CA 94117.



December Issue #103



January/February Issue #104

### Rant: Rave

Nu-Rave? Hahahahaha... sorry to laugh, but haven't we had enough of people saying it's time for the big rave revival, and totally missing the boat over and over again? If we get another four years of Republican bullshit, and kids hate life so much they come up with some other new drug to get fucked up on, and then start, I don't know, playing guitars with their feet or something, THEN we'll have another rave. Actually, the revival we need is gonna be some guy bringing back quaaludes. Then it'll really be Rave 2.0. Until then, Klaxons and pink-and-purple jumpsuits ain't gonna do it for me. P.L.I.D. (Please Let It Die),

Jake, via email

### Blowin' Phuze

Hi Phuze peepz, I grabbed a copy of your magazine at the Playstation 3 launch a while back. It's pretty sweet. Where can I get more? I never see them at stores here.

Daniel, San Francisco

### Ken responds

Well, you've uncovered our little secret: Amalgam Media also publishes *Phuze*, a quarterly gaming mag. Your surefire way of getting a copy? Subscribe to *XLR8R*; the *Phuze* quarterly comes bundled with it, along with a copy of our monthly INCITE sampler CD. You can also find *Phuze* at select gaming shops or on any newsstand that you find *XLR8R* (bundled within)... or you can be a cheap bastard and download a free PDF of the mag at [www.phuze.com](http://www.phuze.com).

**CORRECTION** In issue #104's Vis-Ed, we would like to clarify that Jon Santos was named one of the "Top Forty Under 30" by British fashion magazine *I-D*, not *I.D.* (*International Design Magazine*). The correct spelling of the Services song for which Santos made the video is "Element of Danger."

### Issue 103 Contest Winner: Just how old-school are you?

Back in the mid-'90s when I produced, DJed, and ran a little Southern label that, among others, released the first Scott Herren LP (DeLaRosa & Asora's *Sleep Method Suite*), I had a chance to play alongside Prince Paul, who introduced me to Dan the Automator. I later ran into Dan in an airport in Colorado. He needed a ride up into the mountains but my family had to visit my great aunt so he passed. A week later, I ran into Dan in Atlanta and took him to a Hawks game to make up for the ride. I took him to his gig after the game (and a fresh hot dozen Krispy Kreme donuts) where I introduced him to another friend named Brian (a.k.a. Danger Mouse). Who knew?! Turns out Brian went and took Dan's job by producing the second Gorillaz record. Don't think there are any hard feelings, though. P.S. Met Outkast on a plane to Indiana pre-*Aquemini* and Bonecrusher used to cook in the kitchen of the cafe I used to spin at.

Send me the new clothes already!

J. Stroke



## XLR8R'S "MARCH RADNESS" CONTEST

This month, score fiery dancehall CDs and his-and-hers Paul Frank outfits.

College b-ball stakes may be high this time of year, but we're putting our money on cover star Sizzla to take over the U.S. with his hearty dancehall vibes and his latest CD, *The Overstanding*, the singjay's first for the Koch-distributed DDMG label. We're sure after you scoop this one from our contest prize pack, you'll feel the same. But you know us and reggae: We're pretty damn serious about it. So we're also going to throw in a copy of a great new comp from Greensleeves entitled *Hi Grade Ganja Anthems*, which features classic joints from Frankie Paul, John Holt, Josey Wales, Beenie Man, and of course our man Sizzla. To top it off, one winner will also snag full girls' and guys' outfits from Huntington Beach-born clothier Paul Frank. Few companies can claim that they've brought back naugahyde in a cool way and made guitar straps for The White Stripes (not to mention designed a special bike-and-bag combo for *XLR8R*).

To win, recount your raddest March ever. Did you win the office NCAA pool on a technicality? Did you go buck wild in Sarasota? The best story, told in 200 words or less, takes the cake below.

**ONE GRAND-PRIZE WINNER RECEIVES:** His-and-hers outfits from Paul Frank, and *The Overstanding* and *Hi Grade Ganja Anthems* CDs.

**FOUR RUNNERS-UP WILL RECEIVE:** *The Overstanding* and *Hi Grade Ganja Anthems* CDs.

Entries will be accepted via standard mail and email. Entries must be received by March 27, 2007. Send your answers to *XLR8R*'s "March Radness" Contest, 1388 Haight St. #105, San Francisco, CA 94117 or email [contest@xlr8r.com](mailto:contest@xlr8r.com) with "XLR8R's March Radness Contest" in the subject line.



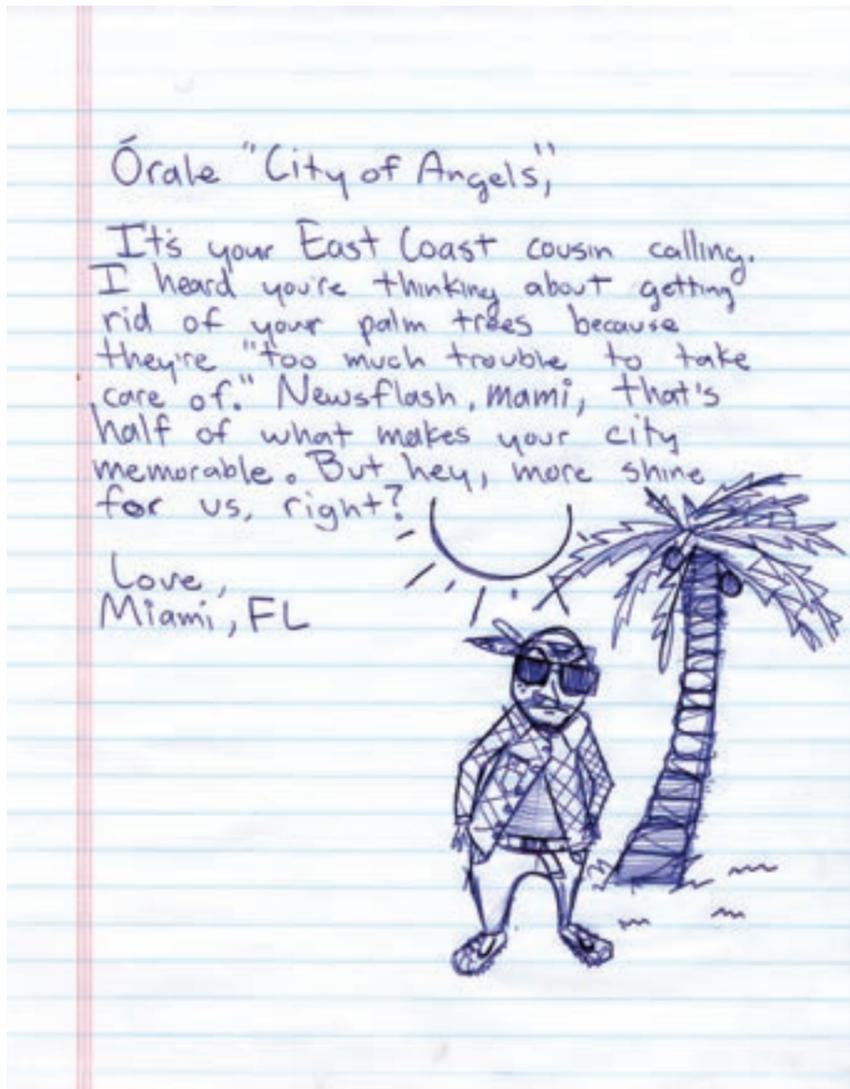
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## BITTER BASTARD'S "FROM CITY TO CITY"

You know, cities got problems just like people do. There's a lot of shit-talking, a lot of jealousy, a lot of "grass is greener"-type stuff that goes down. And a really, really important therapy technique to just, you know, work through all this anger is just to write down your feelings on paper and get it all out. We were hearing a lot of he-said/she-said going on from some towns we know so we were like, "You know what? Stop being a coward. Just say it to their face. Just say it to their fucking face, you big babies." So here it is, brutal honesty to and from your favorite places.



An angry screed from Miami to L.A. in its original form. The rest have been transcribed.

### Camden, NJ to Baltimore, MD

Harm City, huh? Bodymore? Murdaland? Exactly how many hard nicknames you got? Come at us when you get some real crime. And tell John Waters we say "Haaaay!"  
Hugs 'n' drugs,  
*Camden, NJ*

### Detroit, MI to Berlin, GER

What up Berlin? Think you're so cool 'cause you made techno all minimal and fancy and Euro and shit. Like 'cause Richie and ole DBX moved there you got cred now? Well we still got Carl Craig and Underground Resistance and guess what else? Y'all Germans don't know jack about the jit, mmm'kay?  
*The D (That's Detroit, bitch!)*

### Portland, ME to Portland, OR

Hey Portland,  
We think that you guys should surrender your name to us in perpetuity. You're bigger, sure, but we've got lots of years on you. Matter of fact, if you new-school hippies don't turn over the name we're going to wagon-train it over to the West Coast and kick your Teva-clad teeth in with our Birkenstocks and mukluks.  
*Portland, ME*

### Gainesville, FL to London, U.K.

Hey London,  
We heard something about a "nu-rave" thing you got popping off. Well just to let you know we are the most old-skool from day one!!!! We've got the sickest rolls and the dopest breakz DJs around so don't test. You foolz should fly over here and we'll show you how it's really done in the glowstick circle.  
\*PLUR 4 evr\*  
*Gainesville, FL*

### Los Angeles, CA to San Francisco, CA

What's happening, San Fran? Yeah, I said it: SAN FRAN. Fuck y'all. We takin' "Frisco" back, just as easy as we gave it to you. Keep your flowers,  
*L.A.*

### Toronto, ON to New York, NY

Um hi. My name's Toronto, and I was wondering if you'd lend me a quick hand. See, I'm like you, New York, in a lotta ways. 1) I'm big. 2) I've got a subway. 3) Even have 'York' in some of my boroughs' names. But, people kinda think I'm a wuss. Can you help me be more of a bad-ass? And where do I buy the best triple-fat bubble goose jacket? MySpace me lata, bwoy!  
*T-dot*

### Chicago, IL to Stockholm, SWE

Holy fucking fjords Stockholm!! Jose Gonzalez? The Knife? Love is All? Refused? Eric Prydz? I'm From Barcelona? Bathory? Seriously, what are you putting in your country's water supply to produce all these good artists? Oh, yeah, I forgot—universal health care and support for the arts. Hah. If you keep this up, Pitchfork's gonna have to move to Scandinavia.  
*Chicago, IL*  
p.s. Love those umlauts.

### Phoenix, AZ to Atlanta, GA

Dear Atlanta,  
Listen. The Hotlanta thing? It's gotta go. C'mon out West and we'll show you how it's done, sun.  
Stay cool,  
*Phoenix, AZ*

### Berlin, GER to Barcelona, SPA

Barcelona,  
We know you are a warmer climate, but stop stealing our place as the coolest European city.  
Danke,  
*Berlin*

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# CRYSTAL CASTLES

## TORONTO ELECTRO-PUNKS PLAY FOR BEER MONEY.

Ethin is so pissed right now. His band, Crystal Castles, was scheduled to perform in New York, when everything went tits up at the Canada/U.S. border. “Basically, the cops took one look at us rolling up, didn’t even ask us a question. The officer just got on his walkie-talkie and said, ‘I’ve got a white Malibu that I’m bringing into the garage,’” states the multi-instrumentalist. “The garage door closes behind us, and we’re locked in there for seven hours, because they’re *sure* we stole [the car]. I mean yeah, I don’t have a white Malibu, obviously, but I rented one for the weekend so I could get to New York City, and now because of it, I’m locked in this fucking garage with three cops thinking that we’re criminals, assuming that we stole a car.” He sighs. “It was such a bitch.”

If only the border patrol knew what they were depriving New York of. The Toronto band—consisting of Ethin (whose real name is Claudio) and his bandmate Alice on vocals and keys—is one of the freshest electro acts of the moment, with a sold-out 7-inch (“Alice Practice” on Dalston, England’s Merok Records), remixes of Klaxons and GoodBooks under their belts, and another anxiously awaited EP in the wings. As for their sound, it takes the usual designer-sneakers-and-black-hoodie electro-banger scene and gives in a swift kick in the ass with searing punk spirit, courtesy of Alice’s gritty, raw vocals and Ethin’s pounding basslines and glitchy sampler tweaking. It’s danceable yet harsh, fiery but fun.

Crystal Castles coalesced over mutual admiration and good hair. “Alice’s best friend had a crush on me,” chuckles Ethin who, as well as Alice, uses no last name. “She would come hang out and Alice would be with her. They had a band together, so I went to check them out. I loved Alice’s lyrics and everything she was saying. And her haircut.”

Their partnership settled, Ethin gave Alice some 25 songs he had written on his computer for her to record vocals onto. “We actually recorded the mic check, and that song became the song ‘Alice Practice,’” he says. “It was the first time I had heard her sing over the instrumentals, but she wasn’t too happy about me putting it on the internet,” he says, referring to Crystal Castles’ MySpace page. “It’s funny, because after posting it without telling her, Merok Records asked if they could release ‘Alice Practice’ as a 7”. I was like, ‘It’s just her mic-checking and me setting levels. It’s not even a song.’ They were like, ‘No, it’s a song and we want to put it out.’”

He has to laugh at the irony. “We never put any thought into this band at all,” he says. “We put some songs together, got some pictures up [on MySpace]. People offer us money to play live, and it’s like, ‘Cool! Money. We can buy beer with that money.’ The most thought goes into buying alcohol with the money we’ve made.”

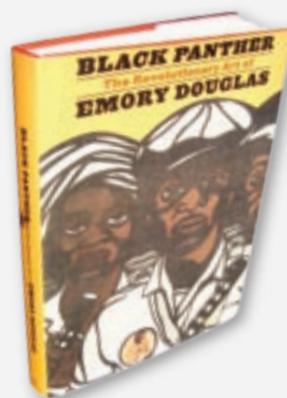
Crystal Castles’ “Untrust Us” EP is out this month on Summer Lovers Unlimited Music. [www.summerloversunlimited.com](http://www.summerloversunlimited.com), [www.myspace.com/crystalcastles](http://www.myspace.com/crystalcastles)



Words Cameron Cook

Photo May Truong

Pictured Alice and Ethin of Crystal Castles



## ONE HEP CAT

A new book documents the quiet brilliance of the Black Panther's boldest artist.

The history of the Black Panther Party is filled with the bold-faced names of key leaders, martyrs, and political prisoners. But as ***Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas*** (hardcover; Rizzoli, \$35) demonstrates, those images of raising fists and black berets wouldn't have become such iconic images of black pride without the benefit of Douglas' bold graphic design and communication savvy.

From 1967, when he laid out the second issue of the *Black Panther* newspaper, to 1979, when the paper folded, Douglas was the Panther's official Revolutionary Artist, working mainly in posters and newsprint to spread the party's beliefs. His rich body of work created a recognizable revolutionary "brand." His raw, almost Orwellian caricatures of cops as dirty swine, with clouds of flies buzzing around them, helped popularize the term "pigs," but Douglas was much more multi-faceted. He illustrated powerful political statements; one striking poster shows Bobby Seale strapped to

an electric chair with a salivating vulture, representing the government, hovering overhead. Douglas was able to communicate the Panthers' struggle against poverty and inequality beautifully, creating stunning images of dignified people, fighting injustice with rifles in hand.

Containing a wealth of images, along with interviews with key figures like Kathleen Cleaver and Amiri Baraka, this first-ever compilation of Douglas' work documents the relationship of art and propaganda to party doctrine and history, while linking the images to the art of related Third World independence struggles. While comparisons between Douglas' work and that of his 1960s American contemporaries would have been welcome, this volume makes a convincing case that Douglas' art "provoked a new consciousness." *Patrick Sisson*  
www.rizzoli.com

*Works by Douglas from Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas (from left): "We Shall Survive Without A Doubt," August 21, 1971; Bobby Seale strapped to an electric chair, March 15, 1970. According to the book, Seale credits this image with helping save his life.*

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### SO EMOTIONAL

Indie hip-hop guru turned singer-songwriter RJD2 breaks down his influences.

Expanding upon the themes of the primarily instrumental *Since We Last Spoke* (Definitive Jux), *The Third Hand* finds former sampling maestro RJD2 doing his own drum programming, instrumentation, and vocals.

"It got to the point, with sampling on the MPC, where it just got stupid," RJ says of his new direction. "I was lifting such minute samples, it was just easier to make them myself. Also, I'm a little dude making little records on little independent labels. I'm not in a Just Blaze-type situation where I have the resources to clear all those samples."

While figuring out the intricacies of placing microphones and engineering, RJ is also grappling with putting feelings into words. "[Songwriting is] the most intimidating and daunting part of making music," he says. "I'm in awe of people who can put such eloquence in their songs. I feel like words are much more concrete than chords and riffs." With that in mind, we asked RJ about some of his favorite songwriters. *Patrick Sisson* *The Third Hand* (XL Recordings) is out now. [www.xlrecordings.com](http://www.xlrecordings.com)



#### 1. THE TEETH

One of my new favorite bands is Philly's The Teeth; they sound a lot like the early Kinks' records. They have really great chord progressions and vocal harmonies and are one of the few groups that have impressed me with their writing.



#### 2. THE ZOMBIES

I feel like *Odessey and Oracle* is a record I'm never going to be able to live down. If I built a small list of records that shaped the way I think about music, [this album] would be on it.



#### 3. THE BEATLES

Everything about them is perfect. The more I listen to Paul McCartney's singing, I realize he has such clarity—his ability to hit every single note without any melisma is unbelievable. And [their engineers], George Martin and Geoff Emmerich, were really pushing the boundaries.



#### 4. DONNY HATHAWAY

He and Curtis Mayfield are both lyrically inspiring. There are a lot of people I find terribly poetic, and both these guys have written some songs that are amazingly poignant.



#### 5. RADIOHEAD

They know grooves and know how to make it work. It was really exciting to me when they first made that transition to *Kid A*. It was like the second season of *The Wire*: the show just kept widening its focus without dumping the previous season. That's what Radiohead does.



Upper Playground Worldwide  
Los Angeles, California  
Photo by EstevanOriol.com  
[upperplayground.com](http://upperplayground.com)

myspace.com/mrtrigger



Graniph t-shirts by designers (clockwise from top left) National Forest, Neasden Control Centre, Doug Yaeger, and Evaq

## WRAP BATTLE

Graniph presents sensible, stylish new takes on the classic t-shirt.

Japanese and German design sensibilities are generally thought to be some of the most refined in the world, so it should come as no surprise that one of the hottest graphically focused clothing lines on earth comes from a creative combination of the two. Started in 2000 by German expats living in Tokyo, Graniph has been consistently knocking out some of the most exquisitely produced gear in a city where progressive fashion is nothing short of ubiquitous. Most of the company's t-shirts sell for around \$25 USD (dirt cheap by Japanese standards) and they're constantly updating their collections, which can be perused at the tiny, cramped storefronts they've hidden throughout Tokyo. For the non-Shibuya-bound, Graniph also takes

orders through their website—which will begin shipping internationally starting next month—and there is talk of a store opening in NYC sometime this year.

Having worked with a legion of graphic design's leading lights—among them Build, Vault 49, Deanne Cheuk, and Craig Metzger—Graniph is now opening up their line to the pixel-pushing superstars of tomorrow. Through March 31, the company is accepting entries for an international design award; winners will receive cold, hard U.S. currency and the opportunity to have their t-shirt design mass-produced. Jump on this shit before Lupe Fiasco raps about it. *Evan Shamoon* [www.graniph.com](http://www.graniph.com)



## DOLPHIN & TEKNOIST

GETTING MENTAL AND MELODIC WITH MANCHESTER'S MOST HARDCORE.

There's a steady noise pounding away in the middle of England, a kick-drum heartbeat coming from Manchester that's pushing 200 BPMs and beyond. It's the new sound of hardcore as made by Greg Dolphin and Mike Teknoist, old friends who are absolutely mental about pushing the merger between hardcore and breakcore to its logical extremes.

After college, Dolphin started a hardcore record shop in Manchester; Teknoist was one of his most faithful customers. The pair teamed up to run one of the UK's longest-running hardcore weeklies, *Steam*, from '94 to '98, and they've been refining their sound ever since via releases on *Deathchant* and *Planet Mu*. "We're trying to do stuff that's more organic, stuff that grows and isn't just the same thing for five minutes," says Dolphin of the duo's tracks, which are full of half-time breakdowns, dancehall samples, and swooping filters that lend warmth to brutal kicks. "We're quite passionate about doing something different and a bit more grown up than [having] just a solid kick drum banging away. It's got to have more of that kind of motion and power behind it... Although, by its very nature, it's quite abrasive and tough to listen to."

The duo is also quickly becoming recognized for their ballistic, shenanigan-filled live performances at events like London's *Bang Face* party and the *Planet Mu Ammunition* party at *Electrowerks*. "There were 700 people in *Electrowerks*. It was fucking rammed!" enthuses Teknoist. "Aphex Twin was there, *Squarepusher* was there... and the reaction that the kick drum gets, people just go crazy!"

Teknoist's current pride and joy is his fledgling *Ninja Columbo* label, which has seen five releases in two years from himself, Dolphin, and newcomer *Scheme Boy* from London's *Adverse* Cambor crew. "[*Scheme Boy*] is quite a skilled producer, and he's got a different angle on it than us; [his stuff is] more melody-based [and comes] from a very strong electronic music background," says Dolphin. "That's what we're looking for, people who've got some serious knowledge to bring to [the genre]." The pair has tracks slated for release on *Pacemaker*, *Bangerang*, and *Mash Up*, and a remix for *Duran Duran* forthcoming on *Cock Rock Disco*. The real surprise, though, will be the debut album they're currently working on.

"It won't just be a load of tracks that we've made—it's a serious album," explains Dolphin. "But it's hardcore, it's gonna be heavy..."

"It's fuck-off rave!" shouts Teknoist gleefully from the other room.

Dolphin and Teknoist's material is available through *Toolbox* distribution and [www.thehardstore.com](http://www.thehardstore.com). [www.myspace.com/ninjacolumbo](http://www.myspace.com/ninjacolumbo)

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what moves you

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# TEAM SHADETEK

## A PAIR OF RESTLESS NATIVES PUT NEW YORK CITY ON THE GRIME MAP.

New York City isn't a place that people can leave easily. Ask Team Shadetek's Matt Schell and Zach Tucker. In 2004, the grime/hip-hop/IDM-fusing production duo, both native Manhattanites, decamped to Berlin, paid minimal rent, and made music full-time. But they couldn't stay away from their hometown for long.

"It's a fucking fact, dude," says Schell. "New York is a tough place to really leave. I always knew I would basically spend my life here. I [had] never left New York; I've been here literally my whole life. But I had to get out of New York before I could really be here. And now I'm back."

Fittingly, there's shouts to NYC all over *Pale Fire*, Team Shadetek's new LP for Brooklyn label Sound-Ink. On "Brooklyn Anthem," one of the record's standout tracks, MC 77Klash deems Brooklyn girls "the sexiest" over bass stabs, scattershot drums, and ragga chatting from Noble Society member Jahdan.

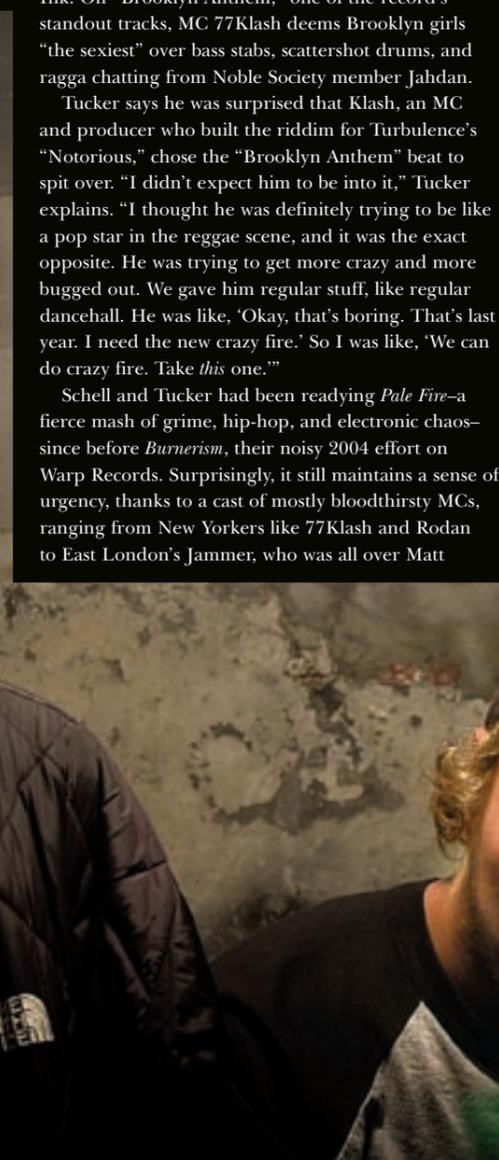
Tucker says he was surprised that Klash, an MC and producer who built the riddim for Turbulence's "Notorious," chose the "Brooklyn Anthem" beat to spit over. "I didn't expect him to be into it," Tucker explains. "I thought he was definitely trying to be like a pop star in the reggae scene, and it was the exact opposite. He was trying to get more crazy and more bugged out. We gave him regular stuff, like regular dancehall. He was like, 'Okay, that's boring. That's last year. I need the new crazy fire.' So I was like, 'We can do crazy fire. Take *this* one.'"

Schell and Tucker had been readying *Pale Fire*—a fierce mash of grime, hip-hop, and electronic chaos—since before *Burnerism*, their noisy 2004 effort on Warp Records. Surprisingly, it still maintains a sense of urgency, thanks to a cast of mostly bloodthirsty MCs, ranging from New Yorkers like 77Klash and Rodan to East London's Jammer, who was all over Matt

Shadetek and DJ Sheen's 2006 *Heavy Meckle*, a mix-tape full of Neckle Camp posse tracks that accurately captured grime's vigor and rawness. Though *Pale Fire* has seemingly taken forever, rowdy electronic offerings like "Dogs" and "Kalamata" definitely show the merits of time: they balance *Heavy Meckle*'s restlessness and *Burnerism*'s detuned synth buzzes, while channeling the frenetic energy of the place Team Shadetek is proud to call home.

"What I loved about Berlin is what reminded me of New York," says Tucker. "It just made me miss New York, so I came back."

Team Shadetek's *Pale Fire* is out March 13 on Sound-Ink. [www.wearechangeagent.com](http://www.wearechangeagent.com), [www.sound-ink.com](http://www.sound-ink.com)



Words Dominic Umile

Photo Manny Dominguez Jr.

Pictured Matt Schell and Zach Tucker from Team Shadetek

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UBISOFT

# GOOD STUFF

A few of Wowch's favorite things.

Here is a short list of things Wowch finds funny: pugs smoking doobs, pandas flipping the bird, dragons with beer cans. Not coincidentally, these are themes you'll find on the New York-based brand's t-shirts, whose psychedelic-meets-thrift-meets-*Bill & Ted's* aesthetic is not for wallflowers. Wowch was started in 2003 by Columbus, Ohio expats Matt Shankman and Max Cattaneo, who like to listen to Delia & Gavin and claim ducks as their spirit animal. It has since morphed into a full-time job, albeit one that is not too serious. "We don't have too many concepts when we design," writes Cattaneo, "We just try to make stuff that we don't see out there. And that always seems to involve cats for some reason." *Vivian Host*  
[www.wowch.com](http://www.wowch.com), [www.myspace.com/wowch](http://www.myspace.com/wowch)



### FUCK THIS LIFE T-SHIRTS (\$30)

Gangster Dave's morbidly hilarious zine *Fuck This Life* juxtaposes monsters, creatively edited porn, and cartoon characters with intense newspaper headlines, and he's got a line of limited-edition tees that covers similar territory. I like the basic black-on-white-shirt style—it makes them look kinda like those "Choose Life" shirts Wham used to wear. Dave doesn't have a website but it's cool to publish his number (718-915-6189) because he likes getting calls from strangers/fans.



### TEETH OF THE HYDRA GREENLAND (\$13)

If you're into head bangin', then this album might just rip you a new one. It's the stoniest, awesomest doom metal we've heard in a while. Every song tells a fantastical story that takes you on a horrific voyage to Indian burial grounds, World War II Siberian prison camps, and frozen Viking outposts. Turn off the lights, turn on the strobe, light one up, and listen at full blast!  
[www.teethofthehydra.com](http://www.teethofthehydra.com),  
[www.teepeerecords.com](http://www.teepeerecords.com)

### UMBRO BY KIM JONES SNEAKERS (\$180-\$200)

It's taken about four years for me to find another brand of sneaker that really wows me besides Adidas Originals. Umbro by Kim Jones shoes are a breath of fresh air in a market that's all about rehashing old ideas. These woven ones take the cake. Granted, they take a while to break in, but that has given us two straight dudes time to truly appreciate the saying "fashion before function."  
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# CLARA HILL

## THE NEWEST VOICE IN NU-SOUL

While the rest of the world is being buzzed awake by alarms, cinching up their ties, and rushing out the door to catch the commuter train, Clara Hill takes an all-together different approach to life. Hill stops to smell the roses. She listens to the wind rustling the leaves of trees, birds chirping off in the distance, and couples whispering to each other on a nearby park bench. In short, she takes in the world around her and uses it as the creative fuel for her deeply personal musical compositions.

"Nature is always my inspiration: particular moments, words, harmonies, sounds, most of the curious things around me," avows this beautiful native Berliner, who has rocketed up the roster of her groundbreaking record label, Sonar Kollektiv, to become one of their top acts and their flagship female artist. Beginning as a guest vocalist for prominent acts like Jazzanova, Hill now has two albums to her name as well as multiple 12" singles.

"*All I Can Provide* is more personal, a kind of diary," she says of her most recent album, a rich tapestry of musical colors that seamlessly incorporates musical influences from folk, jazz, and downtempo to deep house and boogie. The record, underpinned by Hill's lilting voice, also boasts an impressive list of collaborators, including Vikter Duplaix, Charles Webster, King Britt, Atjazz, and labelmates Slope. "I had no idea how it would be to work with so many different producers," she enthuses, "but the result is more than I expected!"

Hill goes on to explain that it is this sort of collaborative experience that has helped her grow as an artist. "At present, I get a lot of energy from people. [especially] people I meet when I travel around the world; [by the time] I have to leave them I [get] the feeling I really know them."

Introspective (and a bit shy) by nature, she replies modestly when asked if there is anything else she wants to communicate to her growing American audience. "I think the music that speaks to you is much more important than my words here," she writes via email from Australia, where she's touring. "Music is my platform for expressing feelings and circumstances I can't communicate with real words."

Clara Hill's *All I Can Provide* is out now on Sonar Kollektiv.  
[www.sonarkollektiv.de](http://www.sonarkollektiv.de), [www.clarahill.com](http://www.clarahill.com)

Words Joshua P. Ferguson  
 Photo Benno Kraehahn  
 Pictured Clara Hill

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Mathematics

## BEE TEAMERS

Mathematics' latest project is a who's who of lost Wu-Tang affiliates.

The highlights of producer Mathematics' *Wu Tang and Friends: Unreleased* (Nature Sounds) don't come from Raekwon or Ghostface (though both make appearances), but rather unsung Shaolin soldiers like the currently incarcerated Superb (of American Cream Team and *Supreme Clientele* fame) and M-Speed, who was shot and killed in '03. Posse cuts like "Where's Brooklyn @?" (featuring Bad Luck, All Day, and Allah Real) and "U Don't Care" (featuring Killah Priest, Hot Flamez, and Buddah Bless) take one back to the late-'90s glory days, when the Wu umbrella included a certifiable army of affiliated crews and sub-cliques like Sunz of Man, GP-Wu, Killarmy, Royal Fam... the list goes on. We took the opportunity to grill Math on the whereabouts of some of the forgotten Killa Bees who turn up on *Unreleased*, which collects rarities recorded between 1997 and 2006. *Jesse Serwer*  
www.nature-sounds.net



Solomon Childs

### SOLOMON CHILDS (FEATURED ON "KING TOAST QUEEN")

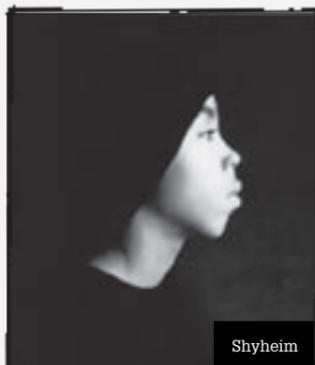
"I've loved Solomon's voice from when I first heard him on Cappadonna's *The Pillage*," Mathematics says. The Staten Island MC, also known as Killa Bamz, left the Theodore Unit (the Ghostface-affiliated crew known in an earlier incarnation as T.M.F.) but recently turned up on Ghost's *More Fish*. Childs recently dropped the *King Kong of New York* mixtape and is preparing a solo debut through Wu Music Group. "I'm supposed to be working with him on that," Math says. "I just sent him some beats."



Hell Razah

### HELL RAZAH (FEATURED ON "MASKED AVENGERS")

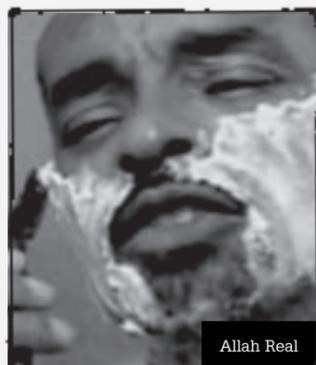
"I worked with Hell Razah a few times but we never finished nothing besides that joint there, and a track for Sunz of Man that was only released overseas," Math recalls. Possibly the most political of all Wu affiliated MCs, Hell Razah has stayed active, forming Black Market Militia with Tragedy, Timbo King, and Killah Priest while keeping Sunz of Man alive. *Renaissance Child* (Nature Sounds), his first proper solo album, dropped last month. "Razah really knows how to get in there and knock it out," Math says. "He's not about bullshit."



Shyheim

### SHYHEIM (FEATURED ON "MASKED AVENGERS," "NON-EQUIVALENT")

When Shyheim first emerged he was 14 and the Wu was barely a year out the gate, making him not only the youngest Clan affiliate but the first extended fam member to release an album. While his follow-ups have all bricked, he's been called the "greatest kiddie rapper of all time" on the strength of '94's AKA *The Rugged Child*. "I've worked with Shyheim many times," Math says. "'Non-Equivalent' might be the first we did, around '97. He's been acting for a while—he was on Robert Townsend's show *The Parent 'Hood*."



Allah Real

### ALLAH REAL (FEATURED ON "WHERE'S BROOKLYN @?," "WANNA BELIEVE")

A Wu elder with a soulful voice reminiscent of Al Green, Allah Real is best known for singing the lilting hook on RZA's 2003 single "Grits." "I basically grew up under Allah, hearing him sing all the time, before I even thought about records," Math says. "He's from near me in Queens but he's been in Brooklyn for years, so I put him on that song ("Where Brooklyn @?"). I'm tryna do more with R&B, so you might just see me do an album with him."



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# SPIN CYCLE

News and gossip from the music world.

Those in Miami this month may get that "something's missing" feeling when they notice the absence of WMC's rival, the M3: Miami Music & Multimedia festival. M3 folks are taking 2007 off to prepare for a bigger 2008 conference. Rumor has it that they may be expanding to other cities as well. If you're at WMC, you can buy, sell, and trade your vinyl at the first annual **International Record Collectors Show** on March 25 at the Miami Beach Resort and Spa. • Welcome to the dollhouse, **Madvillain** and **XTC**. Find their newly molded figurines at [www.kidrobot.com](http://www.kidrobot.com) and [www.irregularminiatures.co.uk](http://www.irregularminiatures.co.uk), respectively. • Did we say **Figurines**? The Danish indie rockers have recently signed to the newly formed **Strange Feeling** label, headed up by Everything But the Girl producer and house head **Ben Watt**. [www.strangefeelingrecords.com](http://www.strangefeelingrecords.com) • While on the topic of hot signings, **Ninja Tune** claims **The Bug** (a.k.a. Kevin Martin) for his new full-length, to feature guests **Loefah** and **Warrior Queen**, set for a May release. • Chicago avant-rock prince **Bobby Conn** is working on a full-length rock opera film for

his Thrill Jockey album **King for a Day**. See his progress at [www.myspace.com/bobbyconnmusical](http://www.myspace.com/bobbyconnmusical). • More on the rock tip: **The Stooges**, after their second nomination for induction, have made it into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. The three remaining members are celebrating with their first new album since before you were born, **The Weirdness** (Virgin), engineered by Shellac's **Steve Albini**. • The Detroit techno scene is the next to be immortalized on DVD. Add to the recent **High Tech Soul** (Plexifilm) film a doc on **Octave One** entitled **Off the Grid** (Futuramic Media) and retrospectives on **Richie Hawtin** and **Underground Resistance** from Electronic Beats' **Slices** series. • The biggest and best news at the winter tech trade shows? Apple's smarter-than-smart all-touchscreen **iPhone**, to be released in June. • Bay Area hip-hop journalist **Jeff Chang** (*Can't Stop Won't Stop*) has edited a new anthology, **Total Chaos: The Art and Aesthetics of Hip-Hop** (Basic Civitas). Make your way to [www.totalchaoshiphop.com](http://www.totalchaoshiphop.com) for the real scoop. • This month, **Mean Red** and **Binary Art** (the founders of the Bushwick



Art Project) launch a new event series entitled **The Future Is Beautiful**, which will focus on the intersection of interactive art and new music. Their pre-launch party in late '06 featured works by **C-TRL Labs** and music by **Machinedrum** and **Skeletons & The Kings of All Cities**. See more at [www.thefutureisbeautiful.com](http://www.thefutureisbeautiful.com). • **VP Records** is on a mission to rule reggae and dancehall (as if they didn't already). In the coming months, keep your eyes out for new LPs from **Marcia Griffiths**, **Lady Saw**, **Wayne Wonder**, **Da'Ville**, and **Richie Spice**. More fiyah at [www.vprecords.com](http://www.vprecords.com). • Fans of the ska, punk, grunge, and early hip-hop eras rejoice: Britain's **Photographic Youth Music Culture Archive** has just opened a retail store in London. Pick up rare prints, books, and clothes in person at the Clerkenwell shop, or online at [www.youthmusicculture.com](http://www.youthmusicculture.com). • A YouTube of the avant-garde? Go to **UbuWeb** at [www.ubu.com](http://www.ubu.com) for some weird-ass (and mind-blowing) shit. • Love you some **Broken Social Scene**? Check out guitarist Andrew Whiteman's new

**Apostle of Hustle** album, *National Anthem of Nowhere* (Arts & Crafts), later this month. If that's not enough Canuck rock for you, **The Arcade Fire's Neon Bible** is released on Merge this month. • Still not enough from the chilly north? **Luke McKeegan's** Vancouver-based house label **Nordic Trax** turns 10 this year. Visit [www.nordictrax.com](http://www.nordictrax.com). • Gas, brake, death. Last year ghost riding took two lives, and police are cracking down in a big way. Go smart.

1. Bobby Conn (photo by Jim Newberry)
2. Marcia Griffiths
3. The Stooges
4. Figurines
5. The Arcade Fire
6. Da'Ville
7. Richie Spice



## DAVID "DISCO D" SHAYMAN (1980-2007)

I met Disco D in 2000. It was a milestone for us both: his first glossy magazine cover, and my first cover story for *XLR8R* magazine. He was 19, barely out of high school in Ann Arbor, MI, and already DJing around the country and running his own record label (GTI Recordings). Totally committed to the ghetto-tech faith, he single-mindedly created a visual and sonic identity that would enable him to market Detroit's ballistic, dirty, underground sound to the world. My impression of him will always be as a gangly kid; tremendously driven and incredibly smart, possessed of a restless energy, a goofy sense of humor, and a huge grin (which he was known to flash to get himself out of trouble after one of his typical off-the-cuff comments). If Dave had any doubts that he would make it big, he rarely showed them; to him, the line between dreams and reality wasn't a pinstripe—it just didn't exist at all.

After graduating college in 2002 and moving to New York, he continued to live the dream—from promoting his popular **Butty Bar** club nights to making hip-hop for big-time MCs. He produced 50 Cent's underground banger "Ski Mask Way," as well as tracks for Nina Sky, Trick Daddy, and numerous commercials and TV shows, before moving to Brazil and supporting their homegrown hip-hop scene. Dave battled depression and bipolar disorder, but he was so full of life and future plans that it came as a shock to friends and fans when he was found dead of an apparent suicide on the morning of January 23. We will continue to be inspired by Dave "Disco D" Shayman's vision, talent, and passion—he was an electric personality who will not soon be forgotten. *Vivian Host*

Disco D in *XLR8R* 74, January 2004  
(Photo by Jessica Miller)



# JAM HOT

AS DAME DASH'S  
FIRST REGGAE ARTIST,  
SIZZLA LOOKS TO  
BRING HIS MUSICAL  
MESSAGE TO A  
NEW AUDIENCE.  
WORDS ROSS HOGG  
PHOTOS MARTEI KORLEY



**“We’re  
dealing with  
the world,  
SO WE  
have to use  
righteousness,  
consciousness,  
& cleanliness.”**

Depending on the song, Sizzla Kalonji’s voice can be filled with suffering, righteous anger, yearning, or vitriol—sometimes he traverses this entire spectrum on a single 7-inch. But there is one constant that unifies his expansive catalog: a tangible, unrivalled passion. Whether singing in a pained

falsetto (frequently pitch-shifting, but always endearing); a resonant, resolute timbre perfectly suited for anthems; or an emotive, throat-shredding scream that instantly commands your attention, you are immediately aware of the voice belonging to the artist affectionately known to fans and followers as “Dada.”



Sizzla’s fervor, coupled with a manic work ethic, has kept him at the top of the sometimes-fickle Jamaican dancehall scene for over a decade, during which he’s released some 40-plus albums and consistently cranked out a few singles a week. “I’m always creating; I like to be innovative,” explains the 31-year-old via phone from a tour stop in New York. Referring to himself in the third person, he adds, “The formula for what Sizzla does is that he always comes with something that the world knows, but it’s new again.”

With the recent release of *The Overstanding* on

hip-hop mogul Damon Dash’s DDMG label, Sizzla hopes to test this strategy on an American audience. While Caribbean artists like Sean Paul and others [see sidebar] have achieved success with more pop-oriented records, he isn’t looking to take that route. “We just wanna present to the world the type of music we make in Jamaica and show the world what it’s all about,” he states. “The U.S. audience, they love dancehall for what it is. It’s a thing of fashion, a thing of love and joy and excitement, so we keep the dancehall culture as it is.”

LEFT: Sizzla stands outside the gates of Judgement Yard, his self-contained compound in the August Town section of Kingston, Jamaica. The Yard contains a studio (where Sizzla and the other members record music), a tabernacle, an area for cooking and eating, and a gathering area for prayer services and devotionals.

TOP: Colours Twins guard the exit of the Yard.

ABOVE: The grounds of Judgement Yard





ABOVE LEFT: Bobo David, Chuckie, Sizzla, and Bongo Daniel in prayer. This devotional is required before the lighting of the Chalice. Their hands form the shape of the star of David, which symbolizes the linkage between His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I and King David.

BELOW FAR LEFT: The lighting of the Chalice.

BELOW LEFT: Elders of the Order of Nyabinghi, Theocracy Reign: Ras Shaka, Ras Sassi, and Ras Tawny. Both Nyabinghi and Bobo Ashanti Rastas congregate in Judgement Yard.

BELOW: Local artist Taunderas

**DANCEHALL DEVOTION**

Sizzla—who was born Miguel Collins in August Town, an eastern suburb of Kingston, Jamaica—released his first album, *Burning Up*, on Washington, DC-based RAS Records in 1995, but his major breakthrough was 1997’s *Black Woman & Child* (on legendary reggae label VP), a disc built around huge hits (the title track, “One Away,” “Guide Over Us”) that showcased the singer’s consciousness and devotion to Rastafarian figurehead Haile Selassie. In 2002, he garnered even more fans with *Da Real Thing*, which contained some of his most successful songs to date: the never-say-die rally cry “Solid as A Rock,” the sincere ode “Thank You Mama,” and the massive “Dry Cry (Just One of Those Days),” one of the singer’s most heartfelt performances. He has also recorded scores of rough tunes made strictly for the dancehall on which, in his trademark growl, he lyrically burns all iniquities in his sight (including—but not limited to—homosexuality and oral sex). This material has often earned him a reputation as a firebrand, and it is noticeably absent

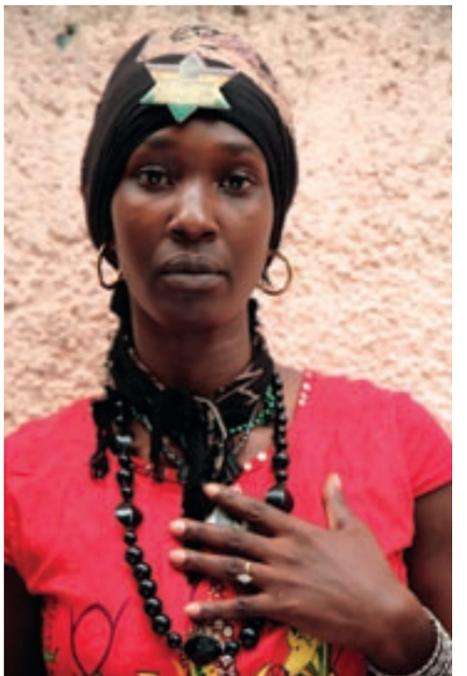
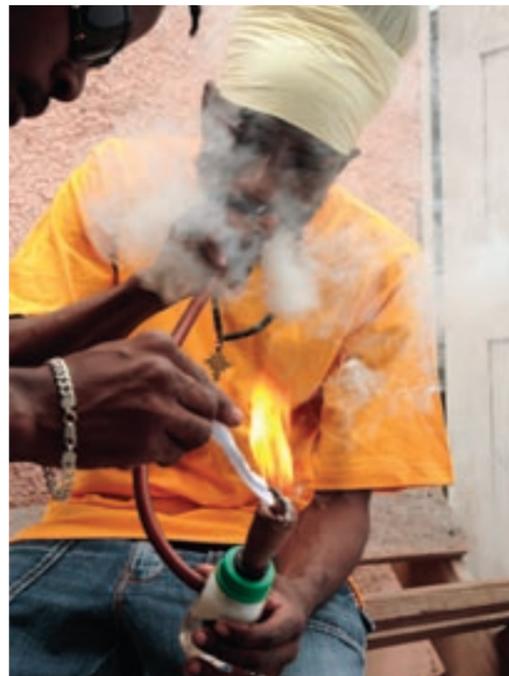
from his most recent release.

“*The Overstanding* is more mainstream,” he admits. “A lot of people don’t know about Selassie I, they don’t know of certain things in our culture, so they wouldn’t [understand]. So what you do is, you give them songs of praises, songs of love, songs that they can enjoy at the club.”

**LAYING DOWN ROOTS**

When dancehall artists make an album for a non-Jamaican audience, the result is often neither hip-hop nor dancehall, but a musical no-man’s-land. Aside from one hip-hop remix, Sizzla manages to avoid this pitfall on *The Overstanding*. It’s a solid reggae album, not (as many predicted) a watered-down disc designed to cater to casual fans of the genre. *The Overstanding* includes updated versions of some of his biggest hits (“Dry Cry,” “Thank You Mama,” and “Black Woman and Child”) as well as a handful of new tunes, including the plaintive album version of “Take Myself Away,” which could easily become a bona fide reggae hit. As he hints at in the title, Sizzla wanted to deliver an album that less-than-rabid reggae fans would be able to grasp.

That’s not to say he’s uninterested in spreading





RIGHT: Taken next to the tabernacle by the riverbank, Sizzla Kalonji (seated) is surrounded by (from left) Ras Ites, Ras Peter, Bongo Daniel, David, Junior, Ray, Rudeboy, Chuckie, Priest Archibald, Colours Twins, and Bobo David.

BELOW: Sizzla leads the local youth in song.

FAR RIGHT: Sizzla records vocals in the Judgement Yard studio.



**“My records are devoted to showing the world one thing, which is love.”**

his spiritual message beyond the borders of his native land. He is, first and foremost, a devout follower of the fundamentalist Bobo Shanti sect of Rastafarianism. “Not everyone in the world might know [about Rastafari]. What you do, you just give them an album with ‘Thank You Mama,’ ‘Dry Cry’... songs that they can relate to. In the future, when they get to love these songs, they’re gonna see what kind of person we are. Then they’re gonna know why we maintain this culture and then they will come back and say, ‘Okay, now we understand what is happening.’”

With *The Overstanding*, Sizzla hopes to lay the groundwork for future U.S. albums on which he’ll be able to delve deeper into his own culture and spiritual philosophies. “We’re dealing with the world, so we have to use righteousness, consciousness, and cleanliness,” he states. “When you keep the people cultural, they’re more conscious of themselves.”

#### TWO MARKETS, ONE LOVE

The making of *The Overstanding*, as well as the strategy behind it, stands in stark contrast to the album Sizzla released just months prior. On his new record, executive-producer duties are shared by Sizzla, Damon Dash, Kareem Biggs, and DJ Clark Kent. On *Waterhouse Redemption*, which dropped in June 2006 on pioneering reggae/dancehall label Greensleeves, the role of executive producer was imparted solely to the legendary King Jammy, possibly the greatest producer the genre has ever known. Accordingly, it is one of Sizzla’s most traditional albums to date. Recorded at Jammy’s fabled studio in Kingston, it features classic riddims like M16, Ba Ba Boom, and Sleng Teng. “I know that some of these riddims are well appreciated in the world,” he says of his choice of material. “Going back on these riddims will resurrect that spiritual vibe, bring back that loving memory. So we’re gonna [put] the lyric on the riddim that would complement the lyrics from 10 years before.”

As a result, *Waterhouse Redemption* is one of the most cohesive albums from any reggae artist in years. Unlike the majority of reggae and dancehall full-lengths, which are often disjointed compilations of singles from a variety of producers, Jammy’s production unifies the tracks, and Sizzla responds in kind. *Waterhouse* is filled with lovers rock and conscious tunes, free of



the raw bashment tracks that pepper earlier releases (and enjoy almost constant rotation via singles). “You might hear Sizzla with dancehall lyrics on a single, but when it comes to an album, we produce it on a more spiritual level,” he notes.

Though the overall feel of *Waterhouse Redemption* and *The Overstanding* is different, the vision behind the two albums is more similar than one might think.

“Making the album with Jammy was more [me] sitting down in the ghetto, living there, seeing the problems and all these things that would [give the record] that degree of intimacy with the people right there,” Sizzla explains. “Coming to [the U.S.], it’s the same thing. We’re not gonna put certain things [on the record] that they might not pick up on; we want the people to pick up quickly. The strategy and the tactic of making the album [is] identifying the two different cultures you’re dealing with.”

In the end, the content is consistent; they may be two different albums but, Sizzla stresses, “My records

devoted to showing the world one thing, which is love.”

#### SIX MILLION WAYS TO VIBE

While Sizzla prides himself on being able to “maintain the vibes of the people,” he also admits that it’s not always easy to do that on full-length releases. “A lot of people throughout the world know Sizzla through the albums, but in Jamaica, we do 45 singles,” he explains. Some weeks, as many as 100 new 45s are released to a fiercely loyal fan base and to soundmen in search of the next big tune. And while albums are important for any artist seeking international exposure, most Jamaican artists live and die by the 45. The frequency with which singles are released allows artists to respond to changes in the musical landscape on an almost daily basis.

“I study it like a puzzle and sort it out,”

says Sizzla of his methodology. “In Jamaica, when it’s wintertime, we’re gonna make a lot of dancehall songs so people bounce hard, so their body keep warm.” He elaborates: “At a special time, at a special place, in a special season, we give you certain music,” citing the popularity of culture songs in spring, bashment tunes in summer, and lovers rock in fall and winter.

Even with all his planning, it’s not always easy to please all fans at all times. “When [I] sing a likkle gangsta song or too much girl songs, the people quarrel. ‘Sizzla sing too much woman song!’ And I sing praises songs, and the next time they say, ‘Sizzla sing too [few] girl songs!’” But he has a strategy for that, too: “What I do, I just give them a whole lot of music.”

Sizzla’s *The Overstanding* is out now on DDMG/Koch. [www.judgementyard.org](http://www.judgementyard.org)

BRITISH REGGAE INSTITUTION GREENSLEEVES CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF BRINGING THE BEST JAMAICAN JAMS TO THE WORLD.

# YARDCORE



Barrington Levy

If Island was the label that brought Jamaican music to the world, it was London-based Greensleeves Records that made sure the music's core of international fans kept their crates full with the latest tunes outta yard. Currently home to Vybz Kartel, Busy Signal, and Macka Diamond, among others, the label is as relevant today as it was during the late '70s and early '80s, when it issued breakthrough albums from such dancehall luminaries as Barrington Levy and Yellowman. In their first-ever joint interview, Chris Sedgwick, Greensleeves' former owner and managing partner, and Chris Cracknell, its long-time director of A&R, talk about three decades worth of rockers and why, after three decades, they are turning the label over to new hands.

## How did two white guys from England end up starting a Jamaican music label that ushered in the era of dancehall?

**Chris Sedgwick:** Greensleeves started as a shop in (London suburb) West Ealing. Upstairs we did soul and reggae, downstairs we had everything else—pop, rock, Irish, Polish. Everyone seemed to go straight upstairs, so we specialized in black music once we moved to Shepherd's Bush (in West London) in 1977. [At that time], disco and jazz were mostly controlled by the big companies, but reggae was much less organized. Mainstream rock had become predictable and unexciting. There was a bit of revolution in the air: punk was starting,

Island were putting money into Bob Marley, and suddenly everyone got into reggae. We were meeting producers and artists, so we decided to try putting out records.

**Chris Cracknell:** There were a lot of sensational records we got as imports once or twice, and weren't able to get again. We had also built a large mail-order business. We'd send out a list of records once a month and, by the time people ordered them, they would often no longer be available due to the erratic pressing of 7" singles in Jamaica. Because there was such great music coming out, we felt it should be more widely available.

## As a small label, was it logistically difficult working with artists in Jamaica then?

**CC:** It was very much a producer-led business. Producers would come to London with a dozen albums on offer from various artists and we would license the albums from the producer. Henry "Junjo" Lawes was very significant for us early on. We have a large catalog of his material, and worked closely with him, and he suggested artists who we might record. Our friend John Bull would travel to Jamaica quite often—we gave him tracks that we liked and were interested in, and he'd try to make contact with various producers for us. The producer community was small then so word quickly got 'round that there was an English company looking for material.

## You brought a distinct visual aesthetic to reggae and dancehall, thanks to Tony McDermott, your in-house artist.

**CC:** When we had the shop, albums might arrive from Jamaica in plain bags with no information as to who played on them. We wanted to present the albums in a unique way, and Tony was on a similar wavelength to us. He obviously came up with the "Carnival of Reggae History" disco bag, which became one of our trademarks. Because of the success of that sort of cartoon thing, when we decided to gather [The Scientist's] dub mixes onto a series of albums, we came up with those crazy album titles and added sound effects to enhance the themes.

## Although you weren't the first to release one, you helped pioneer the rhythm album as a dancehall institution. When did it occur to you to collect all these different versions on a single album?

**CS:** In the early '90s, we'd find we'd have five or six 45 singles on the same rhythm, all with the same b-side, and it suddenly seemed cleverer to put them together on one album. On a soundsystem, different deejays go on the same rhythm and compete with each other. We figured on an album, people could judge that as well by hearing all the different artists on one rhythm, one after another.

**CC:** We've always stressed the importance of the producer, and we designed the series to

include the producer's logo on the front sleeve, so the competition is not only between artists but producers as well. VP had put out single albums with rhythms on them but the idea of having the double vinyl is what really made the series. On single vinyl, to mix the tracks together you'd have to buy two copies. It didn't really make a lot of sense.

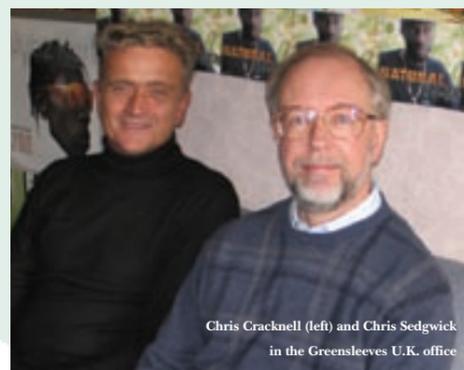
## Why did you sell Greensleeves?

**CS:** Well, I'm 60 years old. I wanted to do something else for the rest of my life. Steve Weltman, the chief executive with Zest, which bought the label, is the new managing director, and a guy named Marcus Lee is taking over the financial side of my job. There's going to be more emphasis on breaking artists, as I understand it. There'll be changes gradually but, in the early stages, it's going to be just as before.

To celebrate its 30th anniversary, Greensleeves will be releasing a Monsters of Dancehall series (first up, Elephant Man) and reissues from Barrington Levy, Wailing Souls, and more. [www.greensleeves.net](http://www.greensleeves.net)



Doctor Alimantado



Chris Cracknell (left) and Chris Sedgwick in the Greensleeves U.K. office

## RIDDIM RUNDOWN Chris Sedgwick and Chris Cracknell recall some of their label's most forward-thinking releases.

### DOCTOR ALIMANTADO

#### *Best Dressed Chicken in Town* (1978)

**CS:** *Best Dressed Chicken* was the first album we released, and continues to be one of our best-sellers. We spent months putting it together with Alimantado and various other people, trying to track down old 7"s where no one had a copy left. A lot of it was dubbed from disc.

### BARRINGTON LEVY

#### *Englishman* (1979)

**CC:** Junjo would bring artists to London to perform, and he would come with reels of their music. I vividly recall a young Barrington Levy—he was about 14—came on one of those trips, along with [the recording of the album] *Englishman*. Most reggae albums were just compilations then, but *Englishman* was a proper album. We shot the cover photo with the Rolls Royce here in the West End.

### WAYNE SMITH

#### "Under Me Sleng Teng" (1985)

**CC:** King Jammy used to come to London often. He brought a Casio keyboard back to Jamaica with him, and Sleng Teng was born from one of the preset rhythms. We got to hear it early on... We've always tried to move things ahead and influence the music, so it was an obvious song for us to put out.

### DIWALI RHYTHM (2002)

**CC:** Diwali created so many hits: Wayne Wonder's "No Letting Go," "Get Busy" by Sean Paul, Lumidee's "Never Leave Me." A lot of people didn't realize those come from the same rhythm—[Stephen] "Lenky" Marsden made sure the songs on it sounded different. The U.S. really seemed to connect to Jamaica through that rhythm.

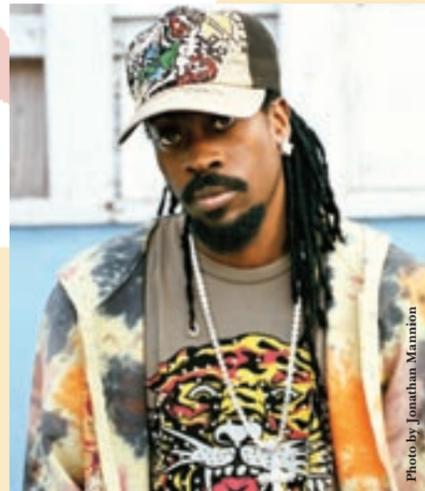
# CROSSING OVER

CARIBBEAN ARTISTS MAKE A SPLASH STATESIDE.  
WORDS ROSS HOGG



## ELEPHANT MAN

The genre's most flamboyant artist recently signed with Bad Boy Records, a deal that could easily take his career to the next level. He and Diddy are a natural match; both have an almost preternatural ear for interpreting hits from the '80s.



## BEENIE MAN

His 2002 duet with Janet Jackson ("Feel It Boy") exposed the self-proclaimed King of the Dancehall to a wider audience, but his foray into pop music pales in comparison to the sexually charged material that keeps his huge Jamaican fan base happy.



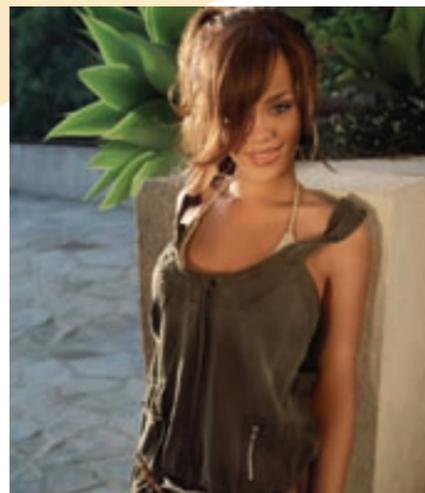
## BOUNTY KILLER

The Warlord made a surprising appearance on No Doubt's "Hey Baby" in 2001, but for years his focus has been on outlining the plight of sufferers in Kingston's ghettos and waging a lyrical war with his sworn enemy, Beenie Man.



## COLLIE BUDDZ

With a smash debut single ("Come Around") and a prominent guest spot on Beyoncé's "Ring the Alarm" remix, this Bermuda native could be reggae's greatest white hope since Snow.



## RIHANNA

The Barbados native shot to fame in 2005 with "Pon De Replay" over a variation of the Diwali riddim, the track used for Sean Paul's "Get Busy" and Wayne Wonder's "No Letting Go." She recently beat out heavyweights Mary J. Blige and Beyoncé to become the Billboard Awards 2006 Female Artist of the Year.



## SEAN PAUL

His 2004 album *Dutty Rock* won a Grammy for Best Reggae Album and went double platinum, but his biggest coup came in 2006 when he bested Nick Lachey and Kanye West to win the American Music Awards Favorite Male Artist honors.

A grid of promotional cards for the album *RoadKillOvercoat* by BUSDRIVER. Each card features the artist's name and album title in pink and white text on a yellow background with a teal geometric pattern. The grid is 5 columns wide and 6 rows high. The card in the third row, second column from the left, is replaced by a black vinyl record with a gold center label. At the bottom of the grid, the text "RoadKillOvercoat Available Now / ON TOUR WITH RJD2" is displayed in white and blue. The ANTI logo is located at the bottom right of the grid.



# ANTIQUES ROADSHOW

TWISTING TONGUES AND TAPPING ASS  
WITH TTC, FRANCE'S FUNNIEST MCS.  
WORDS ANDY HERMANN PHOTOS BASTIEN LATTANZIO

It's right up there with "all black people have rhythm" and "Asians can't drive": "The French," goes the old, familiar stereotype, "take themselves too seriously." What a crock. These are the people who gave the world Molière, *La Cage Aux Folles*, and Daft Punk; they worship slapstick legend Jerry Lewis, for God's sake. Yet for some reason we cling to our image of the French as laughably solemn intellectuals, sipping *café au lait* and reading Camus.

For a long time, the same stereotype got applied to French hip-hop, but not without reason. Its ambassadors were stone-faced *artistes* like DJ Cam and MC Solaar—groundbreakers to be sure, and deadly serious about their craft. French beats and raps—at least the ones getting heard by the rest of the world—prompted too much chin-scratching, not enough ass-shaking. Where was Jerry Lewis when you needed him?



Enter Tido Berman, Teki Latex, and Cuiznier, better known as TTC, three Parisian MCs who have injected a much-needed dose of verbal slapstick into Francophone hip-hop. Aided by their longtime DJ Orgasmic and producers Para One and Tacteel, the members of TTC have established themselves as France's leading party rappers at home and abroad. And on their third album, *3615 TTC*, the collective proves they *still* don't take themselves seriously. You don't need to understand French to pick up on the whacked-out sense of humor behind tracks like "Strip Pour Moi," which has something in it about artichokes, or "Frotte Ton Cul Par Terre," which starts out like a dirty French version of the "Hokey Pokey" before going into a double-time electro workout worthy of Sir Mix-A-Lot.

It's all part of TTC's ongoing quest to create "pure pop music that stays in your head all day... that really sounds effortless." So says Teki Latex, the group's most fluent English speaker and thus, their semi-official spokesman to the American press. "Our previous album, *Bâtards Sensibles* (Big Dada), already had the same kind of pop ambition," he explains, "but it was still too complex, too overproduced... The hardest thing on earth is to create the simplest songs."

Even at its simplest, *3615* runs circles around most American hip-hop, although sing-along anthems like "Paris Paris" are indeed much poppier and more accessible than anything on the manic, mind-blowing *Bâtards Sensibles*. But longtime TTC fans needn't worry—they haven't gone mainstream by a longshot.

The beats—produced by Para One, Tacteel, Orgasmic, Tido, and Modeselektor—still squiggle and lurch, peppered with stuttering drum machines and unexpected bass drops, while the three MCs tongue-twist the French language into such distorted, funhouse shapes that it's hard to imagine anyone catching all the references, whether they're from South Central or Neuilly-sur-Seine. "My French isn't great," admits Will Ashon of Big Dada, the group's label, but when he heard their first single, "the three voices contrasted so well and had so much character I instantly wanted to sign them. It was only later that I found out just how dirty the lyrics were. Then I liked [them] even more."

France has the second largest hip-hop scene in the world after the United States, a fact Teki attributes, only half-kidding, to French television of the '80s. "When you're a kid from that generation in France, you have no choice but to be into hip-hop," he insists. "We grew up watching *The Fresh Prince*, Eddie Murphy, *The Goonies*... The easiest way to artistically recreate the charisma, the swagger, the aesthetic associated with those characters that you identified with during your whole childhood, is hip-hop."

With a teenaged Will Smith and '80s-era Murphy, whose



greatest contribution to pop music was "Boogie in Your Butt," as cultural touchstones, it's no wonder the guys in TTC bring a keen sense of humor to their work. You sometimes get the sense that these guys don't take *anything* seriously. Ask Teki what he'd be doing if he wasn't a rapper and he deadpans, "I'd be a gigolo, a cook, or a magician... or I'd be Tom from MySpace." Still, TTC's dedication to their music is anything but frivolous. "Seriously," Teki is quick to add, "I don't see myself working in any other environment than music."

That attitude—taking your music seriously, but not yourself—puts TTC somewhat at odds with mainstream French hip-hop, which Teki admits is mostly "really awful stuff." "It's exactly the same as in the U.S., except that trends in U.S. hip-hop reach our continent three or four years later. So basically the mainstream French hip-hop heads are finding out about crunk and southern styles of hip-hop [from] last summer... but it's all good."

On the flip side, Teki doesn't like TTC being lumped in with the more experimental, highbrow side of things, either. When I ask if the group has ever worked with acts like leftfield DJ crew Birdy Nam Nam, he says, "We're friends with Birdy Nam Nam, but I wouldn't consider our music as a part of this 'experimental/underground' scene in France." Instead, he lists artists involved with his own dance music label, Institutubes, and other French labels like Ed Banger Records, home to hot acts like Justice and Uffie. "It's a huge movement

**“Singing pop songs  
in English  
is okay, but you  
have to rap  
in your  
native language.”**



“The hardest thing on earth is to create the simplest songs.”

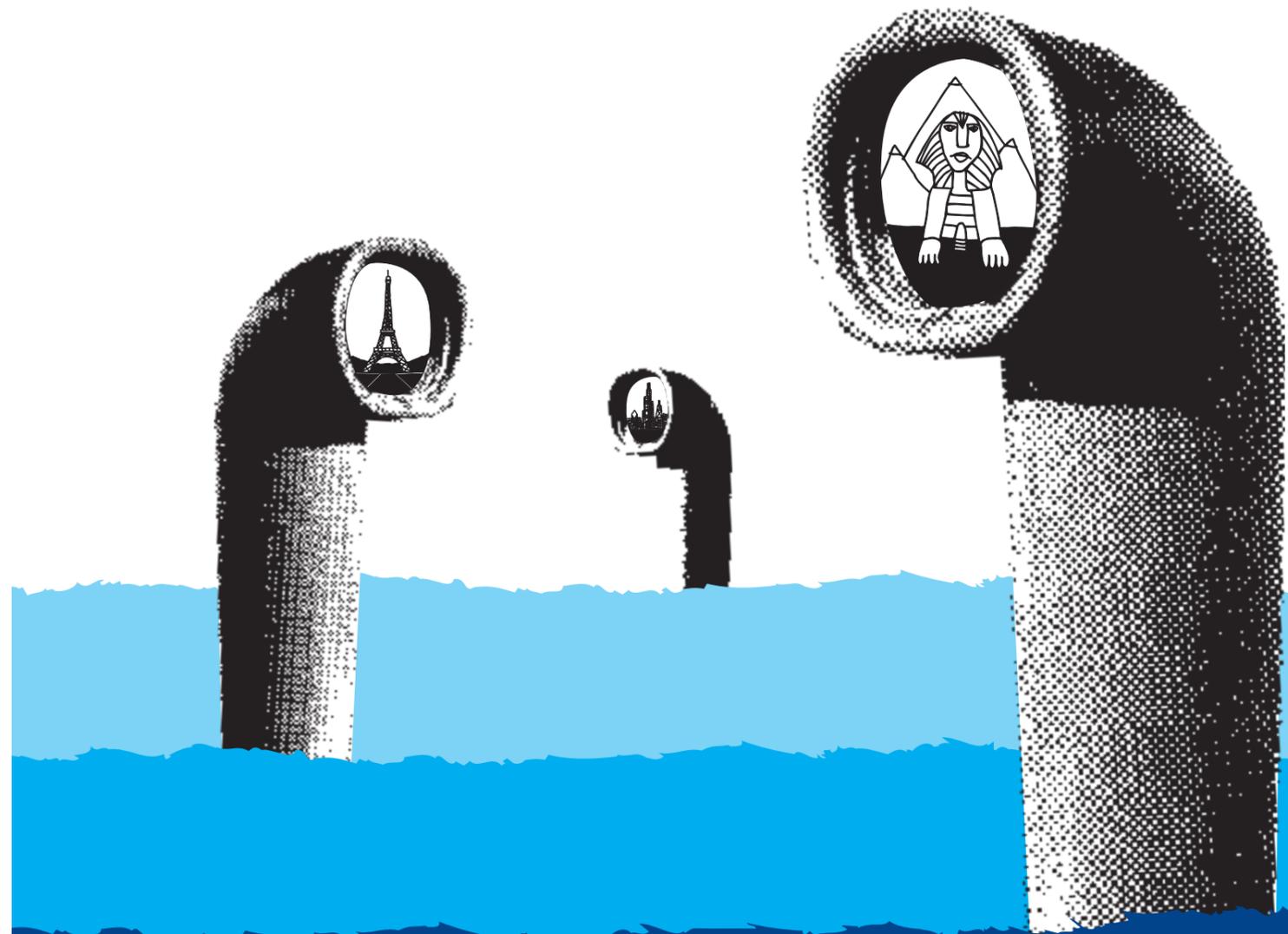


that's really growing right now in Paris, influenced at the same time by hip-hop, dance, pop, and just basically party music. We're glad to be a part of that.”

So what's next for these sensible bastards? First, a European tour, then a U.S. invasion. Let's hope Homeland Security gives all the guys their visas, because a TTC concert is a notoriously riotous blast of Gallic mayhem. Asked how they prepare for their onstage onslaught, Teki says something about taking “all kinds of funny medicines” and drinking “a bottle of champagne each”—which, to anyone who's been to a TTC show, actually sounds plausible.

Then there's the solo and side projects, which are legion: 12's on Institutbes from Tacteel and Para One, Tido's avant-funk producer joints like “Get Down” and “Pimp Under Glass,” new mixtapes from Cuiziner and DJ Orgasmic (“The handsomest DJ ever!” declares Institutbes' MySpace page). Most recently, and most ambitiously, Teki has released a solo album called *Party de Plaisir*, a self-proclaimed “sweeping panorama of club music from the '70s through to the present” that's filled with big, giddy disco and dance-pop beats, with nary a trace of hip-hop. Teki even sings a few songs in English. “To me, singing pop songs in English is okay,” he says, “but you have to rap in your native language... You have to be a genius at playing with words, the sound of words, and vocabulary if you want your rap to sound effortless. I've been rapping in French for more than 10 years and I feel that if I started rapping in English now, it would take me another 10 years to get to the level I have reached in French rap.”

TTC's *3615 TTC* is out March 27 on Big Dada.  
[www.myspace.com/inbedwithttc](http://www.myspace.com/inbedwithttc), [www.bigdada.com](http://www.bigdada.com)



HIP-HOP LUMINARY EL-P FIGHTS THE POWER WITH TRUTH SERUM SPIT FROM AN ACID TONGUE.  
WORDS SCOTT THILL PHOTOS TIM SOTER

# A SCANNER, DARKLY





“There is  
**dead**  
around the corner.”

and I think  
a lot of  
people are  
ignoring  
it.”

It seems a lifetime ago. Destruction screaming through the air, deep into the city, smashing into the skyline’s metal-and-glass spines. The nation cocooning into fear, paranoia, and delusion, succumbing to hallucinations of wholeness via consumerism, a population drugged to grab the party line and move to the front of the checkout line. As if nothing ever happened.

And did it? In the blink of a disastrous new millennium, time stopped and reversed, rewinding to hide in corrupt churches, lucrative invasions, self-indulgent tax cuts. The invisible gears of America’s massive multiplayer façade continued to turn, cracking bodies and shattering minds and trying to make everything break for good.

Jaime Meline, known to the world as El-P, saw it all happen and he couldn’t take it. In 2002, he went on the offensive, fighting against the fictions with *Fantastic Damage*, an album whose shotgun sonics were matched only by the seething vitriol of his informed lyricism. “Deep Space 9mm,” a syncopated rejection of the previous millennium’s optimism, envisioned America as a new Rome. “Stepfather Factory” soundtracked a fatherless future where children obsess over useless products, mothers are raped and forgotten, and deliverance comes via mass-produced automatons fueled by alcohol and violence.

But El-P’s bracing truth was too much for people. *All Music Guide* called the album full of “paranoid totalitarian nightmares”—after 9/11, no less. *Rolling Stone* gave him high marks for sound but short shrift for subject matter, accusing him of “swinging wildly” with “inscrutable rhymes.” *Fantastic Damage* survived as a potent underground must-have, but the rest of the culture imbibed the more accessible emo-rage of another white rapper named Eminem. If you ask El-P, the narcotizing is still in effect.

#### MAD WORLD

“Where are the angry records?” Meline asks me over the phone, sounding like he’s trying to kill off the last vestiges of a cold. “I’m fucking angry and upset right now, and I’m also scared and trying to come to grips with balancing this incredible fatalism and the fact that I am still alive, that I am still here. We’re not dead yet, but even the violent records aren’t angry these days. And that shit fucking annoys me.”

At least Meline is doing his part to change that. *I’ll Sleep When*

*You’re Dead*, his hard-hitting follow-up to *Fantastic Damage*, is easily as loud, angry, and dystopian as its immortal predecessor, if not more so. It packs years of post-9/11 turmoil tightly into 13 acidic tracks. As a testament to El-P’s growing stature and relevance, it features a guest sheet that’s longer than the memories of most Americans, including cameos from Mars Volta’s Omar Rodriguez-Lopez and Cedric Bixler-Zavala, Cat Power’s Chan Marshall, TV on the Radio’s Tunde Adebimpe, even Nine Inch Nails’ architect Trent Reznor, as well as the usual cast of characters from Definitive Jux like Aesop Rock and Mr. Lif. But their voices are all practically unrecognizable, pounded down into El-P’s muscular mixes of noise and poetry that dizzily defy convention.

“Someone who listened to the new record said something that made a lot of sense to me,” he explains. “It was this: Your musical background will dictate how you hear this record. If you’re a hip-hop head, you’ll hear hip-hop. If you’re a rock head, you’ll hear that too. To me, it’s all hip-hop, but it’s everything else too. I don’t really fucking care anymore, you know? I really don’t, man. Where I’m trying to go with music, and the influences I have, I just want to mash it all together and rebuild it. Make it coherent.”

#### DARK MEAT

Coherence is on parade here, but so is overwhelming density; each track is soaked with satire, allusion, political fury, and cacophony. “Tasmanian Pain Coaster” lifts a conversation between the doomed Laura Palmer and friend Donna Hayward from David Lynch’s disturbing film *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*, while “Smithereens (Stop Cryin)” uses the original *Star Trek*’s red alert alarm as a tracking tempo as El-P comes out swinging against a “world of super-duper whores.” “Drive” situates four-plus minutes of laconic sociopolitical commentary in a matrix of automotive

metaphor, slamming Hummers and *Pimp My Ride* samples into an apocalyptic highway for El-P to drive down spitting lines like “my generation is carpooling with doom and disease.”

“There’s a lot of metaphor in that song,” El-P confides, “and some of it I want to just let people unlock. I will say that I really spent a lot of time trying to streamline my writing. But it’s a general way of saying that there is dread around the corner, and I think a lot of people are ignoring it.”

#### WAR STORIES

But few tracks from *Fantastic Damage*—or *Fun crusher Plus*, his classic with Company Flow, for that matter—are as personal and devastating as twin stars “Habeas Corpses (Draconian Love)” and “The Overly Dramatic Truth.” “Habeas Corpses” is a dystopian sci-fi slice of heartbreak about an executioner’s love for the woman he is charged to kill: “*I’ll tell her she’s innocent and she’ll show me she’s not/I kiss the number on her arm then lay her on the cot/I’m the first to touch her without gloves on/She’s the first to kiss me without crying/Life before her was just dying/Me and prisoner two-four-seven-two-nine-zero-zed/Away from all this violence live inside each other’s heads.*” It hurts to listen to it, especially when you see the photo El-P posted on his blog next to its lyrics: A lone Iraqi woman in a burqa carrying groceries down a destroyed street while an American soldier points a rifle at her from a distance.

And then there is the confessional pain of “The Overly Dramatic Truth,” which El-P wrote about a relationship that went awry because the woman in question was too young, too naïve, and too trusting in a world where all she sees is “living forever” while all he sees is “war.”

“I think my man Cage said it best,” El-P reminisces. “‘Pain, suffering, confusion, love, happiness? That’s college for writers.’ This is what we pull from. It’s hard. That song was not easy for me to put on the album. It’s a pretty revealing song, you know? And I’m always struggling with that: How much do you reveal, how much do you hide? I decided early on in my career that I was just going to reveal everything. I’m not going to do it halfway. I’m not going to write this song and not really go there.” He pauses. “I just think that’s the only way to do it. No guts no glory, basically.”

“The Overly Dramatic Truth” is Jaime Meline at his all-time greatest, opening his own wounds and corruption and letting everyone see the wreckage. Its steady stream of lyrical oppositions and juxtapositions are immediate and visceral; lines like “*You think I’m a genius/I know I’m a whore*” and “*You’re too young to ask out loud/I’m too old and I know that*” slowly strip layers from this onion, powered by a descending keyboard progression and dramatic sexual language that is anything but titillating. It might be the most honest, harrowing relationship song written this century.

“It’s really about being in a relationship with someone who has fallen hard for you and, although you care for them, you’re not really in love with them,” he elaborates. “And you’re faced with the fact that every moment you’re in their company they are falling deeper and you are setting them up for a bigger fall. I just kind of felt dark about it, because I felt like I knew myself much more than she knew herself, knew that I was weak enough to let her dig her own grave. It’s definitely bigger than the specific incident in my life that triggered that song, but it also definitely came from somewhere very personal.”

#### DUTY CALLS

As philosophers and artists have shown throughout the ages, the personal and political are the inextricable yin and yang of human experience. That illuminating schema informs the stellar artistic production of El-P’s career better than anything else. When the dust of his dusted generation settles, his output will stand as the uncompromising work of an artist who did not shy away from throwing everything he had into everything he did. Even if that meant excavating his own naked nerves and wounds.

“That’s our fucking job [as artists],” he exclaims. “You get the bullshit filtration of experience from the rest of the world. I think motherfuckers need to act like the records they are making are the last ones they will ever make. And that’s the only thing in my mind while I’m making my own.”

*El-P’s I’ll Sleep When You’re Dead is out March 20 on Definitive Jux. [www.definitivejux.net](http://www.definitivejux.net)*

## UNDER THE INFLUENCE

### Decoding El-P’s favorite sources of inspiration.

#### SCI-FI

El-P has a taste for speculative narrative. “Habeas Corpses” name-drops dystopian flick *Soylent Green*, while riffing on the totalitarian futures envisaged in George Orwell’s *1984* and George Lucas’ *THX-1138*. His love of Philip K. Dick plays out in songs like “Constellation Funk.” That said, El-P was no fan of Richard Linklater’s animated version of Dick’s *A Scanner Darkly*. “Hated it.” Too much Keanu? “Fuck him.”

#### COMICS

“*Watchmen* was my shit,” says El-P. Alan Moore’s epochal graphic novel, perhaps hitting the big screen by election year 2008, changed the comics game forever—and its ending was a violent holocaust in Manhattan. El-P also morphed the title of Moore’s *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* for his new song “League of Extraordinary Nobodies.”

#### FRINGE POLITICS

Tracks like “Drive” are as infused with metaphor about global warming and peak oil as MTV and dumbass rappers. “Global peak oil sort of sent me into a panic attack for about a year once I started researching it,” he says. “When I started peeping what people were really saying about what it would mean and how it would affect us, it fucked me up.”

#### COMEDY

El-P is a dark dude, but not without a sense of humor. On “Deep Space 9mm,” he apes Phil Hartman’s “Unfrozen Caveman Lawyer” from *Saturday Night Live*. Before the defiant “Smithereens (Stop Cryin)” begins, he says “*Cue the dramatic intro machine!*” “The League of Extraordinary Nobodies” uses a laugh track as a backing track. After the serious-as-cancer “Habeas Corpses (Draconian Love),” his crew erupts in laughter.





# DUSTY GROOVES

REISSUE LABELS UNCOVER THE LOST TREASURES OF THE PAST.  
WORDS KEN TAYLOR ILLUSTRATION TROPHY

For better or worse, the idea of a “lost” album almost no longer exists. Whether it’s the effect of the internet’s hyper-real search possibilities, or simply collectors’ affinity for uncovering that which remains to be uncovered, the reissue movement is in full swing, with venerable curators like Soul Jazz leading the charge. But why now? “The market has shifted from the *Goldmine* collector mindset that labels like Ace, Rhino, and Collectables service to a younger, more ravenous youth culture,” says Numero Group’s Ken Shipley. “There’s also been a lot more uncovered in the past decade that larger labels won’t touch because of its lack of hit status. But if you look at no-hits subcultures like indie rock, dance, freak folk, or whatever, it’s no surprise that the audience is gravitating to the unknown.” Here we profile a few of the lesser-known reissue labels, whose founders comb through discographies, junk shops, and phone books to bring you the goods that you never knew you needed.



#### FINDERS KEEPERS

Finders Keepers, named after a track that founder Andy Votel made with his hip-hop crew Violators Of The English Language, falls under Votel's B-Music conglomerate, which also houses Twisted Nerve (home to Badly Drawn Boy) and Delay 68. Finders Keepers ignited in 1999 when Votel and DJ partner Boney released a compilation of "obscure European and American psych-sploitation anomalies" for Fat City records. "When Boney went back to his day job, I began to realize the potential enjoyment of releasing this kind of music on a larger scale," Votel informs. "I just called up the best record collectors I knew, which happened to be my best mates, and we hatched a ridiculous plan." They've been slogging away ever since, lately reissuing Gallic pop soundtracker Jean-Claude Vannier's *LEnfant Assassin des Mouches* and Turkish protest songs from Selda, who, "When she answered the phone, would put on a fake accent and even told us she had died!" exclaims Votel. The typical problems they face? "Plenty of people pretend that they own rights to music when they don't," he offers. "[You risk] getting caught in the crossfire of bootlegger shrapnel and being held responsible for ill-advised band reunions or dodgy remixes."

**Next up:** Japanese biker soundtracks, more Czech fairytales, Polish animation, and Welsh books.  
[www.finderskeepersrecords.com](http://www.finderskeepersrecords.com)



#### THE NUMERO GROUP

Specializing in old soul and funk from forgotten eras and places, Chicago's Numero Group has had remarkable success with their *Eccentric Soul* series, which takes whole catalogs of lost labels and makes them available again. Their own catalog isn't huge, but their holdings might be—they've been buying up a number of small labels and publishing companies over the past year for future release, informs Ken Shipley, head of promotions. "We're of the quality-over-quantity mindset, so you'll probably never see us issue 20 albums in a year," he assures. Still, it's the thrill of the chase that proves most interesting. A&R man Rob Sevier went vacationing in Belize in 2005 armed with just a scan of a funk 45 by the Soul Creations entitled "Funky Jive," the only music he'd known from Belize. Junk stores, antique shops, and bootleg bodegas knew nothing of the record, but Sevier sought out a phone number for the label, Contemporary Electronic Systems. The owner, who now operates a security installation company under the same name, was more than happy to chat, sparking the compilation *Cult Cargo: Belize City Boil Up*.

**Next up:** *What a Beautiful Place*—wintry English folk from Catherine Howe.  
[www.numerogroup.com](http://www.numerogroup.com)

#### LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Started years ago as a Seattle concert promotions company, LITA has since blossomed into a full-on label (with a distribution arm for labels like Daptone and Trikont). LITA not only reissues lost classics—like the soundtrack to *Deep Throat* and Jackie Mittoo's keyboard suite *Wishbone*—but also compilations that pair new artists with older material, such as *The Free Design: The Now Sound Redesigned* (remixes of The Free Design by the likes of Madlib and The Mars Volta). But the feather in their Kangol caps, aside from the recent success of folkie Karen Dalton's *In My Own Time* and their *Jamaica to Toronto* series, is the proper re-release of music by feminist punk-funkist Betty Davis (the one-time wife of Miles Davis). In the '70s, after a nervous breakdown, Davis disposed of most of her worldly things, so it's taken a long time to find old photos and miscellany surrounding her career. With her full involvement, it's the first time that Davis will properly be compensated for her groundbreaking work.

**Next up:** Additional titles for *Jamaica to Toronto* (including a documentary on the project), and Betty Davis' first two albums on CD.  
[www.lightintheattic.net](http://www.lightintheattic.net)

#### THEY GOT (RE)ISSUES: The Best of the Rest

##### ETHIOPIQUES

Afro-funk from Addis Ababa and beyond.  
[www.budamusique.com](http://www.budamusique.com)

##### SUBLIME FREQUENCIES

An ethnomusicologist's wet dream of Khmer pop, Thai chansons, and Saigon noise.  
[www.sublimefrequencies.com](http://www.sublimefrequencies.com)

##### WACKIES

Soul Jazz ain't the only obscure reggae reissue game in town.  
[www.basicchannel.com/label/wackies](http://www.basicchannel.com/label/wackies)

##### CRIPPLED DICK HOT WAX

German advertisement pop and lost post-punk singles find a new home.  
[www.crippled.com](http://www.crippled.com)

##### EM RECORDS

You thought you were obsessed with psych-rock and folk? Visit Japan.  
[www.emrecords.net](http://www.emrecords.net)

##### TRIKONT

An outpost for lost queer poetry, prison funk, and John Peel's record collection.  
[www.trikont.com](http://www.trikont.com)

#### ANTHOLOGY

Started by Kemado Records' A&R man Keith Abrahamsson just a short year ago, Anthology is one of a growing number of online-only reissue labels. And because of its nature, it may also be the most ambitious. "We presently have about 15 records up on the site," says Abrahamsson, "but I have nearly 75 licensed already and I expect to see that grow significantly." The label seems to favor odd metal (Sir Lord Baltimore's *Kingdom Come* is incredible) and even odder psychedelic rock from the likes of Peru's Traffic Sound and Trenton, NJ's Sainte Anthony's Fyre. Anthology has released one original artist album, "King of Latin R&B" Joe Bataan's *Call My Name*, but Abrahamsson remains dedicated to reissues. He's presently searching for a way to put out German acid rockers Night Sun, who had one record out in 1972. "The hardest part is tracking down the owner, but that's also one of the things I enjoy the most," he admits.

**Next up:** Experimental Krautrock from Dom entitled *Edge of Time*, and stuff from the U.K. label Sunbeam.  
[www.anthologyrecordings.com](http://www.anthologyrecordings.com)

#### HONEST JON'S

Blur's Damon Albarn finds himself in the most unlikely positions. Besides heading up his enormously successful cartoon music side-project Gorillaz, he also has a hand in Honest Jon's, the label wing of the Ladbroke Grove, London record shop that's been in business since 1974. Alongside shop-keeps Mark Ainley and Alan Scholefield—who helped birth Mo' Wax, PK, and Boplicity out of the store—Albarn gave Honest Jon's the push it needed to put out its first release: Albarn's *Mali Music* project. Since then, they've issued some 30 albums and 40 singles, including homeless jazz recluse Moondog's *The Viking of Sixth Avenue* (featuring the well-known and sample-friendly "Bird's Lament"), Candi Staton's self-titled record, and Afrobeat co-creator Tony Allen's *Lagos No Shaking*. Licensing these things can be difficult, but Ainsley states that "whatever the hassles, it's a satisfaction to put out something that has been unavailable—to breathe a little life into something that was gone."

**Next up:** More singles from Tony Allen, including a remix by Basic Channel's Moritz von Oswald.  
[www.honestjons.com](http://www.honestjons.com)





# TOTALLY EPIC

AFTER FIXING UP THE FUTUREHEADS AND BLOC PARTY, LONDON SUPER-PRODUCER PAUL "EPIC MAN" EPWORTH DITCHES GUITARS FOR DANCEFLOOR BANGERS. WORDS PIERS MARTIN PHOTOS PATRICIA NIVEN

"Puff Daddy? He's got no flow," says British producer Paul Epworth, clicking a mouse on a cluttered desk in the cozy West London studio where he does most of his work. Gnarly, clanging electro blasts from the speakers. Two minutes later, an unremarkable Diddy verse enters the fray. Then all hell breaks loose.

This is Epworth's just-completed official remix of Diddy's "Tell Me"; it will be released—should Diddy's people approve—under Epworth's Phones guise, and it sounds nothing like the original. "I sped up his voice," grins Epworth, "because it shortens the distance between his timing mistakes."

Epworth is used to tidying up the mess made by others: As a producer, his job is to get the best out of artists. But it's as a remixer and musician in his own right—he releases grinding, peak-time electro as Epic Man on the Kitsuné and Good & Evil labels—that Epworth really expresses himself. Although you may not be familiar with his name, you've almost certainly heard plenty of the music that Epworth has committed to tape.

Two years ago, Epworth was hailed as the U.K.'s hottest new producer, a rough diamond whose crisp and edgy signature sound defined the second wave of Britpop. In quick succession, he helmed debut albums by Bloc Party, The Rakes, The Futureheads, and Maximo Park, a crop of quintessentially English art-rock bands who (following Franz Ferdinand's lead) gleefully ripped off Gang of Four and plunged

into the mainstream. After that he produced a host of new British acts, adding a whip-smart, angular disco dimension to records by White Rose Movement, The Long Blondes, Shy Child, and, surprisingly, hip-hop MCs Kano and Plan B. Epworth estimates that he was responsible for 100 pieces of music between the summers of 2004 and 2005, which accounts for his decision to slow things down.

"[At the end of 2005], I found myself in a very different place, professionally and personally, [compared] to where I had been just one year before. I was working so hard and when I stopped, I wanted to go out and let off steam. But I had to check it," he says, referring to his dedication to partying and DJing on London's hipster circuit. "Now I find that whole scene really unhealthy for my headspace."

Recently engaged and a homeowner, Epworth certainly has more grey hairs than most 32-year-olds, and he puffs four menthol cigarettes down to the filter in little over an hour. He looks tired but healthy, roguishly

debonair in jeans and a t-shirt even though he's currently working 14-hour shifts producing the debut album from electro goths Black Strobe. It transpires that the Parisian duo, comprised of Ivan Smagghe and Arnaud Rebotini, has turned into a metal band. "I'm keen to pull them back to electronica but they're very much up for rock," he shrugs. "When Arnaud sings, he could be Johnny Cash. The album sounds like a fight between Tiefschwarz and Muddy Waters."

Epworth's last major job was co-producing The Rapture's second album, *Pieces of the People We Love*, with Ewan Pearson—in New York and in this very room in Eastcote Studios. It was, he says, a fractured process, which perhaps explains the funky but aimless result. Epworth became the band's sound engineer when they first toured the U.K. and Europe in 2002, and soon after assisted LCD Soundsystem on the road. He would later apply their disciplined punk-funk approach to bands like Bloc Party.



Epworth grew up to the east of London in the commuter town of Bishop's Stortford, rave heartland in the acid-house era. Like his father, an electrical engineer who designed optical fiber, Epworth has worked hard to master the technical side of his job. In the mid-1980s, he fell in love with U.S. electro and Public Enemy. At school, encouraged by the Beastie Boys, he got a criminal record for running a hood ornament-stealing racket. "We used to go 'round car parks [prying] VW and Mercedes signs off, then sell them to the rich kids."

Then he discovered Richie Hawtin and Kenny Larkin and their "soul music using cheap synths," and flipped out over Arthur Russell and Terry Riley. Inspired by King Tubby and Hawtin, he spent his studio apprenticeships learning to make dub mixes of various tracks. "Before I could program, that was the only way I knew how to make interesting sounds with bland guitar bands."

Today Epworth is easing off the indie diet. "I get more satisfaction making dance music at the

moment than I do working with bands," says Epworth. "At one point last year, I thought, 'If I see another guitar I'm going to scream.'"

His early Phones remixes for Annie, U2, and Death From Above 1979, among others, were crude but effective big-room floor-fillers for which he bastardized Bobby O. "They all sound cheap 'cause I did them on a laptop," he admits. Upcoming reworks for Roxy Music and Black Strobe are meatier and more supple, while his latest Epic Man tracks, "Sharpen the Knives" and "Worryin'," are nifty, new-rave bass bombs targeting Klaxons kids and the Ed Banger bunch.

"I always look for a fundamental response in the music I make," he says, stubbing out his fag as Black Strobe saunters into the studio to start work. "I like my hair to stand on end."

Phones' "Sharpen The Knives" (Kitsuné) and a remix of Bloc Party's "The Prayer" are out now, as well the Epworth-produced "Drop The Phone"/"Down on Yourself" single from Shy Child. Epworth is also producing albums for Arctic Monkeys and Kate Nash. [www.myspace.com/phones](http://www.myspace.com/phones), [www.paulepworth.com](http://www.paulepworth.com)

## SUPER SONICS Epic Man's top five studio tips

### 1. LEARN HOW TO USE A MICROPHONE

The sound of an instrument changes depending how far away you place the mic; you can create the tone of something depending where you put the mic. The 'body' I'm able to get off a snare drum is partly because you tune it low and partly because you put the microphone as close as you can physically get without it distorting.

### 2. LEARN TO PROGRAM

When you can 'fix' tracks and sound, it allows you infinite creative freedom. For me I felt like, 'Okay, I can really use my imagination now.' When I learned how to use software, I knew I could create some of the ideas I had in my head.

### 3. KEEP EVERYONE HAPPY

A lot of production is man-management. You have to be sensitive to the overall atmosphere of the studio and to individual members. Sometimes when people are unhappy they won't say it, and occasionally when bands are happy with something they won't say so. It's juggling guesswork, trying to make sure no one's dragging their heels; if they are, you have to deal with it.

### 4. LISTEN TO NEW MUSIC

In my work I've tried to strike a balance that's modern and fresh-sounding and forward-thinking and kind of classic. Obviously I've realized now that doing all those things together, you actually create something of the time, which is a shame. There are some records that just don't age, like Talk Talk's *Spirit of Eden*.

### 5. SHORT CABLE LENGTHS

Short cables means better signal quality. It's the old, purist, Steve Albini style: Don't use the desk to record. Keep the distance between the mic and the place you're recording from as short as possible.

### AND FINALLY...

#### EMPLOY AN ENGINEER

Get someone who knows what they're doing, because I've forgotten most of it, despite the fact I've been doing it for years.

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BORDERS.

# BE MORE



BALTIMORE'S WAREHOUSE SCENE BLURS THE LINE BETWEEN PERFORMANCE ART AND PARTYING.

WORDS NAT THOMSON  
PHOTOS DEVON R.K. DEIMLER



There's no giant neon arrows pointing to the raddest of rad warehouse spaces in Baltimore. Smartly, the people who live in these spots know how to keep quiet. When they throw parties they try to keep everyone inside or on their way elsewhere, clearing the sidewalk with the passion of 1950s Irish New York cops. Sweaty students in Day-Glo tank tops and homemade sweatshirts cutting butts on the corner can *still* cause a stir with the authorities, despite the crime and trafficking that the city sees day and night. But if you spot a few roguish art-college escapees, you'll at least you know you're at the right place, since Baltimore's warehouses are quickly becoming the best place to dance, mosh, and sweat to an ever-expanding roster of bands that blur the line between punk and electronic, hard rock and performance art.

"We started Wham City about two years ago [when] several friends and I moved down to Baltimore after we finished college at [SUNY] Purchase," says the collective's Dan Deacon, on the phone from his tour bus in Georgia, and probably wearing the most retarded t-shirt you can imagine. "We moved to Baltimore because there was a lot of available real estate, and the art scene was always very unpretentious, we had found." These artistic pilgrims—not just musicians, but also a couple playwrights, a sculptor, and a painter—would eventually get the party started in Charm City. But not right away.

"We didn't know anyone so we didn't really do anything except sit in our house and break whatever items we brought with us from NY, and that got very boring," recalls Deacon. To break this destructive cycle, the crew christened their loft space Wham City and began hosting shows, musical and otherwise. The first Wham City event was a production of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*; a number of stately theater



**“People are really more willing to spazz out.”**





and lecture nights followed, regularly mixed in with the balls-out shows the space has become known for. In turning their loft into a dual-use space—a limitless creative outlet/six-pack social club—Wham City quickly made nice with the locals, and it's been a fruitful love affair ever since.

"Because of our building's proximity to the [Maryland Institute College of Art], people just started coming," explains Deacon. "Eventually it started to seem like there was a scene, and that we were one of the regular venues having shows and doing things."

MICA students and Baltimore natives alike gravitated to the freedom and energy of the space and its approach, which in turn encouraged a variety of similar endeavors.

"When I started school at MICA none of this was really going on," says Mark Brown, an art student and DJ/promoter who throws the Are We Not Men? parties. The nights are held at The Depot, one of the few scene spots that isn't a warehouse space; rather, it's a bar that only recently let go of its '90s layover gay-goth positioning. ("It used to be called 'The Creep-o,'" says Brown.) Now Brown books a cross-section of DJs, local bands, and even touring acts (including Matt & Kim and Baltimore's own Barr). "Things are interconnecting more and more," says Brown. "The dots have been connected between Wham City, Wildfire, and what we do at our party."

The Wildfire in question is the duo of Matt Papich of Ecstatic Sunshine and Devon Diamond, both MICA students. Together as Wildfire Wildfire,

they promote shows, and release records like a Cex-produced mash-up/mixtape of Baltimore bands. "The warehouse situation in Baltimore definitely sprouted the scene," says Papich. "That's where [Ecstatic Sunshine] started playing. It's easy because you can just do it yourself, and everyone goes because they can all drink and it's cheaper than going to the bars. For us, it seemed like there was room for [Wildfire Wildfire] to book even more shows. No one else was going to do it."

The importance of cheap rent and the availability of warehouse spaces cannot be scoffed at—indeed, it's what keeps this scene fresh and fun. "There's more willingness to participate in the show and have fun," says Kevin O'Meara of the band Video Hippos. "People have more inhibitions in a public space. When you're in someone's home, people like to get crazy." One of O'Meara's contemporaries, Samuel N. Ortiz of Thrust Lab (a duo that can only be described as Paul Hardcastle raised on NES and Pizza Hut) concurs. "To me, it's kind of mysterious," he muses. "If you compare shows in Baltimore to shows elsewhere, people are really more willing to spazz out, go crazy, and get sweaty and get into it!"

[www.wildfirewildfire.com](http://www.wildfirewildfire.com), [www.myspace.com/ecstaticsunshine](http://www.myspace.com/ecstaticsunshine), [www.whamcity.org](http://www.whamcity.org)

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PHOTO RETOUCHING Richard Petrucci ([richardpetrucci.com](http://richardpetrucci.com))



**Beth** wears Tahir NYC vintage sunglasses, Rockers NYC Sugar Hiccup t-shirt, Chilli Pepper gauchos; **Alex** wears Fila hooded zip sweatshirt, Boxfresh Label t-shirt, LRG Grass Roots raw denim jeans. Previous spread: **Zeric** wears Kr3w Cm Blazer.



**Zeric** wears Ducksauce green paisley hat, Gabriel Urist Little Brooklyn chain, 55DSL Jetliner jacket, Kilo Goods t-shirt.



**Amy** wears Claw Money zip-up jacket, Muchacha jersey top, Gsus Industries Laguna capris, Girl Props gold hoop earrings and key and heart necklace, Hermes scarf.



**Jeff** wears Tahir NYC vintage sunglasses, Cody Hudson/Struggle Inc. for Staple Teachers/Cheaters t-shirt, Garbege Identity Crisis hooded sweatshirt.

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THE FRENCH MOONWALKERS' MEDITATION  
ON AN MP3-PLAYER WORLD



Air has spent the better part of the last 10 years finessing its own slow-motion descent into perpetual 3 a.m. The water-colored dream pop of 1998's *Moon Safari* evoked images of robots buzzing happily along the Seine, but Nicolas Godin and Jean-Benoît Dunckel have since been loath to revisit that sunny terrain, preferring instead to soundtrack the administering of man-sized sofa indentations the world over. To that end, they hit their high-water mark with 2004's *Talkie Walkie*, where they showcased their lustrous production skills (which recall the full-bodied mid-ranges of '70s AOR) on 10 tidily composed songs. But with its source material too slow to remix and nothing as chart-ready as, say, "Kelly Watch the Stars" to keep it afloat, the sadly slept-on *Talkie Walkie* quietly slipped past most dance-music nuts unheeded.

**AIR**  
**POCKET SYMPHONY**  
Astralwerks/US/CD

Their first album since *Talkie Walkie*, and their fifth full-length overall, *Pocket Symphony* reunites Air with producer Nigel Godrich (Radiohead, Beck), whose characteristically sparse sound choices match up nicely with the duo's own filmic-pop sensibilities. It also incorporates a handful of ancient Asian instruments, such as *koto* and *shamisen*, which Godin apparently picked up under the tutelage of a Japanese master. But don't let the exotic new ornamentations throw you; *Pocket Symphony* (a title that reads as a wink at the iPod generation and an acknowledgement of the incredible lightness of the music contained within) finds the duo stymieing conventional wisdom by heading even further down the rabbit hole, where they court quietude and chase after spacious holy moments.

This is *Talkie Walkie* under three more duvets. Meaning: The spiky little pop numbers ("Alpha Beta Gaga") that once broke up Air's regularly scheduled stargazing have been almost entirely erased from the equation, in turn paving the way for Godin and Dunckel to fully indulge their sleeper whims. Since this is hardly unfamiliar territory, when they find those little pockets, they sound beautiful as ever. Opener "Space Maker" sets the pace with a series of wood-block hits, yawning synths, and piano runs; "Left Bank" twists and turns on a gorgeous vocal melody; and "Photograph" plays like a brooding cousin to *Talkie Walkie's* "Cherry Blossom Girl." Elsewhere, both Jarvis Cocker and The Divine

Comedy's Neil Hannon offer slightly muted, sleepy-eyed performances, their songs ("One Hell of a Party" and "Somewhere Between Waking and Sleeping" respectively) slotting snugly into the album as a whole. But it's a fine line between light as air and barely there, and Godin and Dunckel occasionally wander over the median. Tracks like "Mayfair Song" and "Redhead Girl" are so awash in watery notes and empty spaces they practically evaporate upon contact, while a couple of others pleasantly waft by without much drama or weight. There are ultimately too many beautiful moments here not to recommend it, but, unless they repeat themselves with ever-subtler variations on a theme, there's not much more Air can do with this particular formula. The good news is that you're probably not going to find a better soundtrack with which to ride out the last days of seasonal-affective purgatory. *Mark Pytlak*





Photo by Herve Baudat

**DÄLEK**  
**ABANDONED LANGUAGE**  
Ipecac/US/CD

It's not easy being the most innovative hip-hop crew on Earth, but Dälek is persevering with gusto. On their third album proper (ignoring a crucial collab with Faust), *Abandoned Language*, the New Jersey trio scales back on the caustic noise grind and ushers in eerier tones and more blissful atmospheres than found on their previous full-lengths. Here, finesse trumps brute power and in-the-red squalls, elements that Dälek had taken farther than anyone in hip-hop history. *Language* is the group's most melodically accomplished work, and it also exhibits producer Oktopus' and turntablist Still's continued mastery of drones. MC Dälek's verses continue to boil with articulate rage, lamenting the lack of progress for minorities, and documenting centuries-old injustices as well as current oppression and strife. Dälek's music may have slightly simmered, but its quality remains as staggeringly high as ever—its sting is just more subliminal



**!!!**  
**MYTH TAKES**  
Warp/UK/CD

Post-punk dance-rock jam bands just don't get enough respect for their sheer wizardry. !!! reaches into its trick bag again, emerging with another handful of dancefloor ass-shakers that conjure up The Clash and Talking Heads. Juggernauts like "Bend Over Beethoven" and "Heart of Hearts" keep the party jumpin' with plenty of syncopation and dirty basslines. As delicious as it sounds, *Myth Takes* grooves like an e-addled lap dance from an android in a demented strip club. Strap in for a helluva ride! *Rico Washington*

**BASS CLEF**  
**A SMILE IS A CURVE THAT STRAIGHTENS MOST THINGS**  
Blank Tapes/UK/CD

On his very first release, Bass Clef (Hackney, London's Ralph Cumbers) has created something utterly special, an album influenced by the best of dubstep, Ed Banger-style party breaks, and straight-up heavy Jamaican dub. Not many first efforts reach this level of musical originality and still manage to be great for both the headphones and the dancefloor. If there's any justice, people will be talking about this album in the same breath as Burial's debut. Every single track is a winner—sure to resonate beyond the dubstep community. *Matt Earp*

**BLOC PARTY**  
**A WEEKEND IN THE CITY**  
Vice-Atlantic/US/CD

After the explosive response to *Silent Alarm* in 2005, Bloc Party became known for hooky songwriting and English charm. *A Weekend in the City*, the group's anticipated follow-up, is a flaccid affair that ultimately misses its mark. The brilliant guitar work of "Song for Clay" and "Hunting for Witches" and the otherworldly chants on "The Prayer" offer some redemption, but the record is ruined by embarrassing lyrics and corny production from U2 crony Jacknife Lee. Trading the consistency of their debut for watered-down pop appeal, *Weekend* could just as easily be *The Vice Guide to Coldplay*. *Josiah Hughes*

**BRACKEN**  
**WE KNOW ABOUT THE NEED**  
Anticon/US/CD

Former Hood member Chris Adams has created a hypnotic blend of cold, isolating soundscapes and shambling beats on his debut album as Bracken. It's fitting that his big entrance comes courtesy of Anticon, since the droning vocals and twitching songs fit in perfectly with the label's leftfield sensibilities. While Adams seems wed to one style—junkyard electronics so lulling and pastoral they take on a hint of dread—he executes it well. The emphatic guitar twang of "Fight or Flight" and the tumbling "We Know About the Need" recall the frenzy lurking in many Caribou tracks. *Patrick Sisson*

**THOMAS BRINKMANN**  
**KLICK REVOLUTION**  
Max.Ernst/GER/CD

Like most electronic artists whose careers have spanned nearly 20 years, Thomas Brinkmann is the consummate experimenter. The newest six tracks by this minimal techno/dub vet have but one agenda: plumbing abstract soundscapes where clicks, noises, and tonal harmonies fuse together in a Vulcan mind-meld of sound and concept. Even if sound-art installations aren't your thang, Brinkmann's carefully modulated minimalism (as on "Tilt") injects some *ernst* (German for "serious") into these machine grooves. *Janet Tzou*

**CAPPABLACK**  
**FAÇADES AND SKELETONS**  
~scape/GER/CD

From the moment the pounding drums and scratched vocal samples kick in on the intro to Cappablack's new album, it's obvious that these Japanese instrumentalists rep a new hip-hop paradigm. Throughout *Façades and Skeletons*, members Illeven and Hashim B don't lose sight of the rhythm, especially when providing featured MCs Awol One and Japan's Emirp with dark, speaker-shaking productions. While not quite as head-nod-inducing as these collabs, the duo's more daring work is done alone, as on the dancehall/glitch mash-up "Evil Clap" or the tribal anti-war beat of "5th Dimension." *Max Herman*

**CAURAL**  
**MIRRORS FOR EYES**  
Mush/US/CD

With his second full-length, *Mirrors for Eyes*, Caural (born Zachary Mastoon) doesn't so much propel the glitch-hop format forward as fill in the spaces left behind. It's a quietly rich album, a rusty treasure chest spilling over with broken diamonds and gilded leaves. Over a fairly straightforward boom-bap framework, Caural embroiders his tapestry of undulating harps and flutes, pixie-dusted washes of audio fuzz, and vocoder-filtered angel choruses. Admittedly, cuts like "Re-experience Any Moment You Choose" tailgate Prefuse 73's earlier works a little closely, but they hold a sense of sweetness and wonderment all their own. *Anna Balkrishna*

**COUGAR**  
**LAW**  
Layered Arts/US/CD

Produced by Tortoise's John McEntire, Cougar's debut LP *Law* is a nearly flawless example of intelligent musical design. The Madison, WI-based quintet seamlessly melds electronics and traditional instrumentation into an unclassifiable mixture of instrumental bliss that, while immediately listenable, grows in complexity with each successive spin. Throw the "cinematic" tag on road-trippers like "Strict Scrutiny" and "Interracial Dating" if you like, but the truth is that these two electro-acoustic numbers (and the remainder of *Law*) are so much more fulfilling than any film score of recent memory. It's a compelling, infinitely satisfying execution of melodic subtlety and understatement. *Steve Marchese*

**JOHN DAHLBÄCK**  
**AT THE GUN SHOW**  
Pickadoll Music/GER/CD

It's definitely a crashout when the freakishly prolific John Dahlbäck decides to release a proper album. The best? Or just the *rest* of the Swedish tech-house producer's sprawling catalog of dirty, rave-tastic 12-inches? *At the Gun Show* promises some lip-biting bass-bin moments: "Don't Speak" and "See My Show" are chock full of the most awesomely jagged analog synths and filtered arpeggios this side of Get Physical. Many tracks, though, are short on memorable hooks and long on siren effects and dated, faux-creepy vocals ("See My Show" being an unfortunate offender), making the album a tad wearying. *Anna Balkrishna*

**FUNCKARMA**  
**BION GLENT**  
**THE FLASHBULB**  
**FLEXING HABITUAL**  
Sublight/CAN/CD

Funckarma is seriously underrated in their ability to churn out IDM/EBM that you can actually dance to, but *Bion Glent* showcases the band's atmospheric, jazzy side; it's a head-trip of an album that's undeniably thick in sound without veering into Autechre-level wankery. Meanwhile, Eddie Van Halen-level wankery is key to understanding and enjoying *The Flashbulb*'s most recent album (his eighth in six years). Extreme duels between amen breaks and MIDI guitar are Flashbulb's hallmark, and *Flexing Habitual* delivers them in spades. Synth- and drum-driven breakcore for those with a sense of humor. *Matt Earp*

**HIGH PRIEST**  
**BORN IDENTITY**  
Sound-Ink/US/CD

High Priest, formerly of Anti-Pop Consortium and Airborn Audio, finally unleashes his solo album, running his trademark deep-voiced flows over some truly bizarre but wonderfully outsider hip-hop. Like MF Doom on LSD crossed with a digital Sun Ra, Priest's lurching beats, overdriven samples, and snake-like synths never lose the groove, ultimately making this the strangest post-APC release yet. He sounds like a tottering drunk preaching in a forgotten music store on Mars. A thing of terrible beauty by one of the decade's most amazing MCs. *Matt Earp*

**CLARA HILL**  
**ALL I CAN PROVIDE**  
Sonar Kollektiv/GER/CD

Cutting her club-land teeth with the likes of King Britt and Viktor Duplaix (who produces and sings here on "Paper Chase"), Clara Hill is in good hands on her sophomore solo effort. *All I Can Provide* ranges from dancefloor cuts with beautiful vocal embellishments to soft, jazzy ballads, like the excellent "Endlessly," on which she takes lead. The stellar guitar line on "Just Paradise" is reminiscent of a funkier Nikka Costa, and while the record turns a bit poppy ("Run," "Hard to Say"), her dusky vocal integrity alleviates any grievances. *Derek Beres*

**HUG**  
**HEROES**  
K2/GER/CD

Having played a major role in defining the character of Kompakt sublabel K2, John Dahlbäck does the debut LP honors for the label and pounds some serious dancefloor in the process. While *Heroes* revisits some of Hug's earlier K2 tracks ("The Platform," "Fluteorgie"), his new work is equally killer. "Tactic Without Practice" and "My Dinosaur" are guaranteed fist-raisers, replete with gnarly seismic bass and gritty mechanical backslaps, while "Tiny Stars" and the title cut augment the punchy, minimal flow with a melodic, late-morning caress that will really hit home with fans of old-school X-Trax. *Doug Morton*

**K-THE-I???**  
**BROKEN LOVE LETTER**  
Mush/US/CD

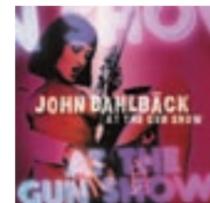
One of the strangest hip-hop records ever, *Broken Love Letter* isn't an album so much as therapy for a man traumatized by relationship problems. k-the-i???'s creepily obsessive digs at the fairer sex are spit in a manic-panic state, his pained urgency negating any sense of familiar flow. k's literally off-beat style is distinctive, but it's an acquired taste. Much better is the music, which juxtaposes subliminal snippets of easy listening with the sort of chaotically teeming, cacophonous funk that makes ELP's joints sound like P.M. Dawn. Think: Bomb Squad producing cLOUDDEAD, with a romantic loser on the mic. *Dave Segal*

**KING SUNNY ADE**  
**GEMS FROM THE CLASSIC YEARS**  
Shanachie/US/CD

Despite the massive size of Nigerian Juju inventor King Sunny Ade's back catalog, one never tires of hearing this guitarist's unique, sometimes quizzical melodies. With a unique voice that's tough to forget, Ade was primed to take over the international stardom Bob Marley left behind—only he never sang in English, much to the chagrin of Island Records. Now we rely on archeological excavations like this brilliant six-track, 70-minute compilation of unearthed medleys from 1967 to '74. One listen to his Hawaiian slide guitar-influenced take on African palm wine music and you too will be hooked. *Derek Beres*

**LCD SOUNDSYSTEM**  
**SOUND OF SILVER**  
DFA-Capitol/US/CD

LCD Soundsystem's James Murphy is a canny studio Zeig who refracts multifold styles through his rarefied sensibilities. *Sound of Silver* surpasses LCD's patchy 2005 debut album, achieving a scintillating balance between high-NRG rhythmic verve and appealing melodies. Disregarding maudlin piano ballad "New York I Love You," LCD loads their second LP with perpetual-motion machine grooves (often glazed with odd electronic effects and accentuated by cowbells). "Get Innocuous" sets the tone, merging the clipped synth wiggle from Kraftwerk's "The Robots" with Murphy's monkish intonations. *Silver* abounds with funky dance-rock anthems that'll please both bedroom trainspotters and clubbers seeking uplifting bangers. *Dave Segal*



**EXPLOSIONS IN THE SKY**  
**ALL OF A SUDDEN I MISS EVERYONE**  
Temporary Residence/US/CD

In 2004, this Austin instrumental quartet scored *Friday Night Lights*, a movie pulsing with the shoulder pad-crumpling hits and kinetic drive of young Texans high on testosterone. (A predictable move, since the band's careening, quiet-loud-quiet cacophony sounds tailor-made for the movies.) On *All of a Sudden I Miss Everyone*, the band seems like it's in soundtrack mode again. More restrained and less explosive, *Everyone* finds the group delicately dropping a few guitar-based nuclear blasts and pulling back instead of pushing the damn button, bringing forth everything they've got and letting God sort it out. There's more color and gentler build-ups, as if the band is stretching out and refining its ideas, which makes the more extreme moments—like the neck-snapping crescendos of clipped guitars and the glittering clusters of piano melodies on



**L. PIERRE  
DIP**

Melodic/UK/CD

Opening like a seaside Fellini film, *Dip* starts with the sounds of gulls, waves, and a distant jazz band playing a mournful dirge. Former Arab Strap member Aidan Moffat takes us on a thematic journey on his third album as L. Pierre, and this one's for the folkies. Acoustic guitars mingle with cello, double bass, and trumpet in a hazy ramble that glows like a sunset. The result is a set of aqueous poems that play out like Nick Drake instrumentals mixed by Biosphere. Dive in. *Tomas Palermo*



**MONEY MARK  
BRAND NEW BY TOMORROW**

Brushfire/US/CD

Money Mark, the groove-thick keyboardist, dials back the funk in favor of some earnest confessions about love, loss, and releasing his first disc on Jack Johnson's label. Okay, that last one was a jab, but the two truly seem to have discovered a laid-back, lo-fi pop nexus together, and while it may not exactly intrigue *Mark's Keyboard Repair* loyalists, *Brand New by Tomorrow's* heartbreak pop sticks to your ribcage. "Pick Up the Pieces," "Pretend to Sleep," and "Color of Your Blues" ache from front to back. *Scott Thill*



**MOS DEF  
TRU3 MAGIC**

Geffen/US/CD

Somewhere between *Black on Both Sides* and *The New Danger* lies magic—*Tru3 Magic*. The Mighty Mos returns with a lyrical depth rare in modern street slangers, reassuring his role of heroic hip-hop jester. Only nothing's funny on the socially poi-

gnant "Dollar Day (Surprise Surprise)," his tribute opus to New Orleans. Mos keeps it interesting by dropping the inspirational soul throwback "There Is a Way," and plenty of analog fuzz on "Sun, Moon, Stars," yet "Undeniable" is the true club killer, with bass turned high and Mos' pure poetic swagger. *Derek Beres*

**OCTOGEN  
2FIVEONINE**

Soma/UK/CD

*2fiveonine* is an electrifying debut, considering its fragile yet epic approach. Glaswegian Marco Bernardi demonstrates his mastery of rhythm on "Les Misereye," tweaking mismatched staccato basslines into a prickly jigsaw of glowing melodies, and old-school ambient tracks "Ligrirl" and "Acieob" could be lost parts of *Selected Ambient Works*. But it's Bernardi's deep love of Detroit sounds that melds these striking pieces into a cohesive whole: "Save Your Saviour" and "Scionide" conjure dreamy atmospheres from clear notes and messy synth swipes, recalling techno's formidable early-'90s years with warm affection. *Janet Tzou*

**OMNI  
BATTERIE**

NatAural High/US/CD

At some point, every artist could use a change of scenery, which Omni confirms on his latest effort. After dropping the decent but ultimately forgettable album *Ballyhoo*, this L.A. MC temporarily relocated to Australia to record *Batterie*—a release that's noticeably more inspired than his last. Working mostly with Aussie producers like Bonez and Optamus, Omni sounds reenergized, rapping over everything from bottom-heavy bangers ("We Are All We Have") to melodic D&B ("Boost"). Omni's subject matter here may not be incredibly original, but even when he rhymes about preserving hip-hop ("My Culture"), this MC finally sounds like he's got a cause. *Max Herman*

**ORIGINAL HAMSTER  
PRESENTS TRENDSETTERS AND THE FOLLOWERS**

Tigerbeat6/US/CD

Unfortunately, much of Chilean producer Vicente Sanfuentes' latest disc is more "follower" than "trendsetter." The bouncy, elastic bassline-filled electro likely wouldn't clear a dancefloor, but it wouldn't necessarily fill one, either. Daft Punk particularly comes through as an influence here, down to the inflections of funk and house layered with vocoders. And the outright cover on the album, a beep-filled version of "Burning Down the House" (with more filtered vocals), doesn't add to The Talking Heads' original. *Luciana Lopez*

**DAX PIERSON/ROBERT HORTON  
PABLO FELDMAN SUN RILEY**

Nosordo/SWE/CD

On this tribute to Augustus Pablo, Morton Feldman, Sun Ra, and Terry Riley, multi-instrumentalists Dax Pierson (Subtle) and Robert Horton (a.k.a. Eggatcher, Future Ears) erect academically rigorous soundscapes that lean more toward Feldman's dispersive use of space than they do dubby rhythmic ballast. Of the titular legends, Feldman and Riley receive the most aural love. At its best, *PFSR* generates fluctuating mantras of minimalist bliss, and foreboding synth jabber that evokes bleak, unpopulated vistas. As earnest and intriguingly bizarre as *PFSR* is, the album, more than anything, makes one want to delve into its honorees' catalogs. *Dave Segal*

**POINT LOMA  
FORNEO**

Azra/US/CD

Nortec Collective fans will recognize Point Loma as Bostich, but while his work with the collective always felt ready for a spin around the dancefloor, he's taken a different route this time. Here, he slowly builds tracks over thick, bassy drones, with synths and percussion dropping in and out, to create something darkly interesting. With one exception, the tracks here are pretty lengthy—and deservedly so, with each feeling like a small journey. You can't always see where Point Loma is going, but that's part of what makes this ride so great. *Luciana Lopez*

**SEAN PRICE  
JESUS PRICE SUPASTAR**

Duck Down/US/CD

With rap in dire need of a class clown, Heltah Skeltah/Boot Camp Cluk veteran Sean Price might just be the funniest MC in town. Like its predecessor, *Monkey Barz*, *Jesus Price* is a knee-slapper, whether Ruck is taking the piss out of himself on the typically self-deprecating "Mess You Made" or spitting sacrilegious gospel on "Church." Thanks to a committee of producers including 9th Wonder, Ill Mind, MoSS, Khrysis,

and Tommy Tee, *Supastar* is also the sort of impeccably produced album where you can just forget about the beats and get lost in the rhymes and stories. *Jesse Serwer*

**PSD, KEAK DA SNEAK, AND MESSY MARV  
PRESENT DA BIDNESS**

Thizz-SMC/US/CD

Reports of hyphy's demise have been overstated; *Da Bidness* makes it clear the "Northern Califoolya" movement's just getting started. An all-star collabo between Vallejo's PSD, Oakland's Keak Da Sneak, and S.F.'s Messy Marv becomes a pimp-ish Yay free-for-all, with guest appearances by E-40, San Quinn, Mistah F.A.B., and the late Mac Dre. The album serves up a potent cocktail of purple, thizz, and 1800 juice-influenced electro-funk slaps, and while it's more of an underground effort (a playaristic update of "Careless Whisper" notwithstanding), if you're scrapin', this is what you want coming out of your grill-mounted speakers. *Eric K. Arnold*

**RADICALFASHION  
ODORI**

Hefty/US/CD

It's obvious from the self-explanatory "Opening" from Japan's Radicalfashion that *Odori* is no ordinary album. The worlds of classical, minimal electronic, and experimental music collide as Kobe, Japan resident Hirohito Ihara creates chaotic, melodic bliss. "Suna" is drenched with dreamy pianos and reverb while, on the opposite end, "Shunpoudoh" kicks off with minimal beats and chopped vocals, hitting you with strong synth riffs and spaced-out clamor that would cause sheep to boogie. Out of this world in all of the right ways. *Velanche*

**REPEAT REPEAT  
SQUINTS**

Soma/UK/CD

On "Flip Flop," the first track on Repeat Repeat's album of gleefully off-kilter beats and loop-driven minimalism, a male voice pops in over the watery synths and squelchy beats to occasionally deliver a nonchalant "uh huh." Humorous dashes like these are the highlight of this album, which is a showcase of Dave Congreve's and Mark Rutherford's acid house roots. The two take their work seriously, delivering slick, sick tracks, but they never get buried beneath their own bombast. The album's accessibility borders on pop, but ultimately the two steer clear of radio-style catchiness—a wise choice. *Luciana Lopez*

**SECRET MOMMY  
PLAYS**

Ache/CAN/CD

Abandoning the thematic constraints of last year's *Very Rec* and *The Wisdom* EP, Secret Mommy's Andy Dixon has gone soft on *Plays*. Using edited audio from acoustic-only jam sessions with friends, the record cuts and pastes wood, wind, and string instruments into boisterous mini-symphonies. Composed as songs rather than experiments, these tracks reveal a human heart behind Dixon's glitchy, often scientific approach. Decidedly anti-electronic, *Plays* is so exciting you'll want to show everyone; the most expressive record in its field, it transcends Dixon's previous work, and is a crowning achievement. *Josiah Hughes*

**SERENGETI  
DENNEHY**

Bonafyde/US/CD

Serengeti's latest album is further proof that this Chicago native could give two shits about what the rest of the rap game is up to. While the beats used here aren't that unusual, Geti's lyrical focus unquestionably is. When he's not trying to figure out his life, this erratic MC shape-shifts into different characters, including an Italian blue-collar sports fan and a delusional drug addict. These personality studies are just about as creative as you'll hear an MC get, although, given the average attention span nowadays, not many will want to try and keep up. *Max Herman*

**SIZZLA  
THE OVERSTANDING**

DDMG-Koch/US/CD

Over the last decade, Sizzla has become perhaps dancehall's most iconic and prolific figure, and though his later releases have varied in consistency, when he's on, no one blazes hotter. Here, Mr. Kalonji brings his A-game—and his crackling falsetto—to almost every track. The album is a sort of greatest hits collection, with updated versions of "Solid as a Rock" and "Smoke Marijuana," along with newer tunes like "Take Myself Away" and "Break Free." The production—by Clark Kent, Ill Vibe, and Kalonji himself—is surprisingly tight, and Sizzla seems more inspired on the mic than he's been in years. *Eric K. Arnold*

**SNAKES SAY HISS!  
I'LL BE LOVIN' YOU**

Famous Class/US/CD

The first proper full-length from Saratoga Springs duo Snakes Say Hiss! is loaded with sweat-'n'-saccharine synth-pop. Surprisingly, the immediate reference points are feminine: the jittery compu-dance of Tracy + The Plastics and the cola-fueled ass wiggle of Chicks on Speed thread through the entirety of *I'll Be Lovin' You*. So it kind of makes sense when lead party-starter Jamie Ayers jokes that he writes it all for the teenage girl. SSH! is perfectly mindless F-U-N, so whether you're into Le Tigre or La Lohan, it's gonna be tough not to rip your shirt off and dance along. *Robbie Mackey*

**SOFTLIGHTES  
SAY NO TO BEING COOL—SAY YES TO BEING HAPPY**

Modular/AUST/CD

Ron Fountenberry—the artist formerly known as The Incredible Moses Leroy—has spent the last few years tinkering with sunburned processor-pop and hazy folk. His latest release (and first with his full band, Softlightes) is as delicate and pristine as the skim-milk voice that tiptoes atop each of the album's 11 ditties. But what Fountenberry missed in crafting these certifiable beauts is simple: The charm of his back-catalog is in its gangliness and untrimmed edges. Here, we get five or so commercial-ready sound-beds, and a record many will call the perfection of Fountenberry's formula. Unfortunately, they'll be right. *Robbie Mackey*



**Mira Calix**

**MIRA CALIX  
EYES SET AGAINST THE SUN**

Warp/UK/CD

Chantal Passamonte's "Nunu" was an edit of a commission from Geneva's Museum d'Histoire Naturelle to create music from the sounds of insects; on *Skinskitta*, her second album as Mira Calix, she sampled stones from North American national parks for their sonic qualities. *Eyes Set Against the Sun* sustains this interest in natural phenomena, drawing on recordings of snow melting, "the weather," birdsong, and the sound of decaying wood (via an uncared-for bamboo xylophone that was crumbling as it was played). Intriguingly, though these field recordings are treated and processed, they remain at least partially recognizable, becoming quite specific emotional triggers in an album that is by turns euphoric and gut-wrenchingly somber. On opener "Because to Why," Passamonte uses a children's choir alongside her own nursery rhyme-like enunciation to disorient listeners; the track is one of several that



**Deerhunter**

**DEERHUNTER  
CRYPTOGRAMS**

Kranky/US/CD

There are placid bands, and those that froth; Deerhunter balances the extremes, and a river runs through it (figuratively, sure, but semi-literally, thanks to *Cryptograms'* burbling undercurrents). Seeing as this five-piece hails from fresh water-challenged Atlanta, however, any regenerative tributary is more likely just the white noise of Interstate 75. Deerhunter could end up on every hipster's 2007 rock road map, as the band culls influence from The Jesus & Mary Chain ("Cryptograms," "Strange Lights"), the bristly bliss of Sonic Youth and Acid Mothers Temple ("Lake Somerset," "Hazel St."), Animal Collective/Grizzly Bear affectations ("Providence," "Spring Hall Convert"), even shimmering spots of U2 (if produced by Darren Emerson with Alan Moulder) on "Octet." Live, the band still indulges in reedy derangement, but even at its most unhinged, *Cryptograms* is cohesive—showing Deerhunter's ability to pile on

**SUPERSCI  
PINETREES ON THE PAVEMENT**

Flyphonic Phonogram/SWE/CD  
Supersci may be new to you, but these hip-hop peeps—with MCs Arka and Mr. Noun at the core—have over 10 years of beat-making, rhyme-saying experience. Originally dropped in their native Sweden last April, *Pinetrees on the Pavement* fits nicely alongside some of the best underground American hip-hop. “A Deuce or an Ace” mixes acoustic guitar samples, head-nodding beats, serious flow from guest Remedeh, and tight scratch acrobatics courtesy of DJ Observe. With fly production and an infectious feel-good vibe, *Pinetrees* is the genuine article, and may rescue you from bland wannabes for a while. *Velanche*

**TARTUFI  
US UPON BUILDINGS UPON US**

Thread/US/CD  
Looping ain’t easy. With *Us Upon Buildings Upon Us*, San Francisco duo Tartufi does its damndest to apologize for the tons of shitty guitar players that stomp on pedals and bury ugly riffs under even uglier ones. Throughout, guitarist/vocalist Lynne Angel quotes phrases gracefully, blending them into a complex, textural wall of sound that’s smartly built then elegantly deconstructed. Meanwhile, she does the same with her piercing alloy voice, and drummer Brian Gorman drops heavy accompaniment behind the kit. A few portions need help, but the whole is an imposing tangle of beauty and ambition. *Robbie Mackey*



**4HERO  
PLAY WITH THE CHANGES**

Milan/US/CD  
Six years after *Creating Patterns*, 4Hero’s Mark (Marc Mac) Clair and Dennis (Dege) McFarlane return with their eagerly anticipated fifth LP *Play With the Changes*, perhaps a reference to how things have evolved for the duo over their noticeable absence. What remains the same is the pair’s penchant for crafting soulful, complex songs for an expertly assembled group of vocalists, here including Jody Watley, poetess Ursula Rucker, rappers Darien Brockington and Phonte of Little Brother, and funk legend Larry Mizell. The result is a studio-perfected and inspired exploration of various types of fusion. Leaving no stone unturned, 4Hero jumps headlong into a blend of jazz, soul, R&B, breakbeat, and funk, showing a passion for all forms of black music past and present. Once again, Marc Mac and Dege humble fans with their encyclopedic musical knowledge

**TEAM SHADETEK  
PALE FIRE**

Sound-Ink/US/CD  
Sound-Ink expands on its stellar output with the long-awaited Team Shadetek album. Those familiar with Shadetek’s ’04 release, *Bumerism*, will be blown away by the pure energy here, twisting amped-up grime beats with an A-list of UK (Jammer and Skepta), Jamaican (Predator and Red Dragon), and American (Baby Blak and Rodan) MCs at the top of their game. No American producers have done more for the grime scene than Shadetek, and while grime’s energy is here in spades, listen to this album for what it is—pure next-level hip-hop ish. *Matt Earp*

**THE BESNARD LAKES  
ARE THE DARK HORSE**

Jagjaguwar/US/CD  
If you come to The Besnard Lakes by way of their earlier homespun, lo-fi shoegaze suites, the eyebrow-lifting 45 minutes of *Are the Dark Horse*—with its incessant falsetto, Spacemen 3 sonics, and Beach Boys-ian production—is nothing short of shocking. Squealing synthesizers, cascading crescendos of guitars, sappy string sections, and infinite layers of vocals manage to look both forward and back by combining the spooky ethereality of ’50s rock and the baggily loved-up psychedelia of the ’90s. Always keep your eye on the dark horse. *Brian Paul*

**THE EARLY YEARS  
THE EARLY YEARS**

Beggars Banquet/US/CD  
London’s The Early Years loves Neu!—specifically “Hallogallo.” And why not? It’s the most perfectly realized sonic encapsulation of graceful movement ever. The Early Years’ self-titled debut uses that paean to smooth propulsion as its default mode, but other facets emerge, too. They show a predilection for mellow slide-guitar sighs and sincere balladry, like Spiritualized at their most pensive, as well as soulful drone dirges à la *Spirit of Eden*-era Talk Talk. When they’re not in headlong motorik mode, The Early Years tends to descend—and ascend—into sentimentality and bombast. Nevertheless, this disc reveals a potentially great epic rock band. *Dave Segal*

**THE ETERNALS  
HEAVY INTERNATIONAL**

Aesthetics/US/CD  
The postmodern rhythm junkies return with a whirring dose of dubbed soul and funk-ed-up jazz that will probably do nothing to further categorize either their sound or their legacy. “Am I moving forward?” frontman Damon Locks wonders in the rambling “Astra 3B,” and the answer to his question seems to be “yes.” “Patch of Blue” buzzes with skewered beats, while the sedate activism of “Feed the Youth (Stage a Coup)” and “Too Many People (Do the Wrong Thing)” could form the backbone to the most chilled of revolutions. A head-scratcher for sure, but one with depth. *Scott Thill*

**THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE QUEEN  
THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE QUEEN**

Virgin/US/CD  
Damon Albarn’s indistinguishable projects congeal in this abstract supergroup, combining members of The Clash (Paul Simonon), Fela Kuti’s ensemble (Tony Allen), The Verve (Simon Tong), and producer Danger Mouse. Albarn’s studio musings have turned into a dozen-deep recording as quirky as Gorillaz and folky as Blur. In the midst of this psychedelic journey (check the Beatles riff on “Green Fields”) lies the heartfelt, at times quizzical, and, given the name, sometimes political lyrics Albarn is famous for. While the guitar riffs at times prove predictable, and the bass wavering, Allen keeps the pocket tight enough to tie it all together. *Derek Beres*

**THE JAI-ALAI SAVANT  
FLIGHT OF THE BASS DELEGATE**

Gold Standard Labs/US/CD  
When Chicago-based, Philly-born trio The Jai-Alai Savant delivers on its dub-heavy reggae-rock promise, *Bass Delegate* storms. “The Low Frequent See,” with its dark, late-era Specials vibe, and “Murder ‘Pon the Dancehall,” a prototype of dancehall punk, could be lectures to burgeoning dub-rock bands: Step one—learn *these* rhythms. But for much of *Bass Delegate*, Jai-Alai comes across as a regular—if particularly propellant and subtle—pop-infused punk rock band. The finest moments are when these faces meet in the middle: The XTC-ish “Sugar Free,” all pastoral harmonies and lurching pop-reggae rhythms, is nearly perfect. *Justin Hopper*

**ANDREW THOMAS  
GAPS IN THE SUN**

KOMP3/GER/download  
Kompakt’s new MP3 label steps into the light with a full-length ambient release from New Zealand’s Andrew Thomas. Shifting between the piano-laden solitude of tracks like “Lit From Failing Light” and the pure droning energy of “M and K” and “I Am Here Where Are You,” *Gaps In the Sun* hums with Thomas’ gently swirling brand of nouveau ambience. Aimless yet comforting, the tracks wind and loop through an equilibrium of textural warmth, crisp static pulses, and reserved instrumentation on their way to nowhere in particular—which is often the comfiest place to be. *Doug Morton*

**TRANS AM  
SEX CHANGE**

Thrill Jockey/US/CD  
Years before the relatively recent rediscovery that electronics and guitars play nicely together, Trans Am was making indie rockers nervous with their unbiased sonic experimentation. While the output has fluctuated over their decade-plus career, *Sex Change* emerges from the operating room with visible success. The trio has always played by its own rules, but their eighth LP sheds some of their branded irony and outwardly presents the band at their most honest. With tight instrumentals, vintage ’70s synthesizer scores, and solid post-rock groove, *Sex Change* shows a veteran band at last comfortable in its own skin. *Steve Marchese*

**TWILIGHT CIRCUS DUB SOUND SYSTEM  
RASTA INTERNATIONAL**

M/NETH/CD  
Ryan Moore has been on fire for 12 years now, creating the best, most authentic Tubby dub throughout the second half of the ’90s, mixing psych guitars and curious percussion with original basslines and wet-as-the-sea echo drums. Over the last three years he’s added a who’s-who of vocalists into the mix like Ranking Joe, Lutan Fyah, Admiral Tibet, and of course Luciano on a series of EPs. *Rasta International* collects the best cuts and adds some great new ones (unfortunately minus his collaborations with the brilliant Michael Rose). It’s pure dub bliss—a must for all next-century rockers. *Matt Earp*

**VOAFOSE  
VOAFOSE**

Rephlex/UK/CD  
This 20-track disc collates years of Jeremy Simmonds’ studio wizardry as Voafosse. Simmonds, who has collaborated with Boymerang and AFX, is probably best known for 1993’s *Weirs*, a collection of abrasive, abstract techno he recorded with Luke Vibert. Less beat-oriented than that IDM classic, *Voafosse* delves into unsettling ambience and imaginary sci-fi soundtracks festooned with bizarre timbres, psychedelic tone ripples, warped animal cries, and BBC Radiophonic bleeps. The disc includes a few maddening collages involving pitch-shifted and chopped-up voices recorded from TV and radio that you only need to hear once. Otherwise, *Voafosse* is a revelatory archival excavation. *Dave Segal*

**V-WHITE  
PERFECT TIMIN’**

SMC/US/CD  
Make no mistake: V-White is (to quote fellow Bay ambassador Messy Marv) on his hype. The East Oakland rap veteran from The Delinquents has been in the hyphy-movement shadows waiting to drop this bunker buster, which arrives with aid from friends like E-A-Ski, Traxamillion, Too \$hort, and Ant Banks. “We at It Again” bounces with finger-snaps, bongos, and White’s scrappy, G’ d-up lyrics that speak of all things “Town”—*what it do and how it go*. And there’s ample scraper-rattling bass and devastating spit-game moments on “Skyscraper,” “Oakland,” and “Cinco de Mayo.” *Tomas Palermo*

**GEOFF WHITE  
NEVERTHELESS**

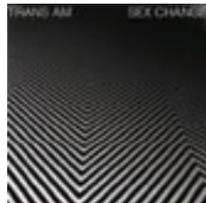
Background/GER/CD  
Barcelona-based American producer Geoff White has shed the mold of the cold, distant techno artist. Where his peers’ minimal tracks are rigid and repetitive, White’s are shimmering and shifting. *Nevertheless* is all about motion and inventive patterns; from organically pulsing dub motifs to the album’s sturdier dancefloor fare, White focuses on intriguing sounds. Warmly glowing tracks like “Sharpie” and “Opposing Platforms” sum up the album’s slower-tempo mood, and the collection’s mixed presentation makes for reflective listening. A worthwhile outing for those seeking a painterly approach to electronic music. *Tomas Palermo*

**WHITE FLIGHT  
WHITE FLIGHT**

Range Life/US/CD  
For his first solo effort, former Anniversary member and product of the suburbs Justin Roelofs takes inspiration from a summer spent deep in the Peruvian rain forests imbibing psychedelics. His production and vocal arrangements are unarguably rooted in his indie-rock conditioning, but *White Flight* also hints at time spent away from Middle America. Frantic voices could easily pass as chants rather than lyrics, and, armed with ProTools, Roelofs twists keyboard and accordion sounds into eerie compositions that suggest an alternate universe. Psychedelics or not, *White Flight* marks a strong start for this suburban kid. *Jennifer Marston*

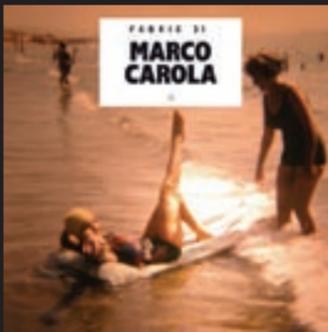
**YPPAH  
YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL AT ALL TIMES**

Ninja Tune/UK/CD  
Filled with dense but nevertheless airy jams that recall Jaga Jazzist as much as Caribou and Amon Tobin, *You Are Beautiful At All Times*, from Joe Corrales’ alter ego Yppah, keeps it busy but interesting. His ambition is a bit large on some tunes, including the stumbling “The Subtleties That Count.” But the poignant pull of “Good Like That” and the crackling funk of “In My Drink” and more make the trip through this Texan’s turntablism worth it. Just make sure to turn up the bass; the treble is as heavy as a Dallas carnivore. *Scott Thill*



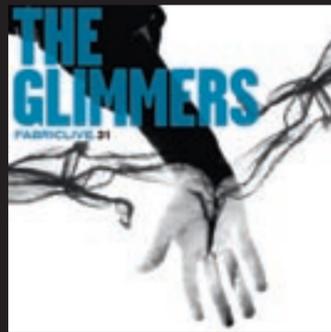
**ADULT.  
WHY BOTHER?**

Thrill Jockey/US/CD  
Nicola Kuperus and Adam Lee Miller are nearly a full decade older than they were when Adult. formed (as Plasma Co.) in 1998 but, for the most part, the Detroit-based duo is still preoccupied with the same themes and sounds that threaded through their proper debut, the *Dispassionate Furniture* EP. While it’s difficult to believe, there’s nearly 10 years of material separating Adult.’s latest Thrill Jockey release, *Why Bother?*, from the buzzing analog synths and head-boxing drum machine patterns of their mysterious, semi-anonymous entrance into the electro world. Yet on the noxious “Good Deeds,” where Kuperus hollowly intones, “*Lock all the doors and all the windows/The pack is coming.*” Adult. still manages to sound like the most anxious, paranoid, and uncomfort-



### Out Now

Fabric 31 sees Italian techno legend Marco Carola conjure some deep, luscious grooves from the widest expanses of the minimal techno genre. From the swagger of Alex Smoke's infectious tech-house, the stomping roll of Audio Werner, to Paco Osuna's bumping freeform cyber-funk, this slow seduction is a hot late-night sound-scape stripped down to the bare essentials.



### Out Now

Belgian duo The Glimmers prove their affinity with artistic freedom on a vivid, alluring mix that defiantly breaks free from all musical trends and restraints. Included are some of the most influential, under-appreciated, forgotten, essential, interesting and cutting-edge beat pioneers. Sway to Black Slate's reggae-tinted drums, tread to electro-acoustic legend Pierre Henry, break to a Freeez classic and shake to Padded Cell's techy take on Mekon, all within the space of one disc.



### Out Now

Fabric 32 comes from the legendary Luke Slater, one of the creators of UK / Detroit's techno marriage, blending the intensity of techno's hardest funk and stripped down minimal flavours, mixed with the sweet swagger and chunky bristle of a fat street party. Featuring the most hot-tipped tracks from the likes of Carl Craig, Audion, Switch and the Juan Maclean, this is the mix of now.



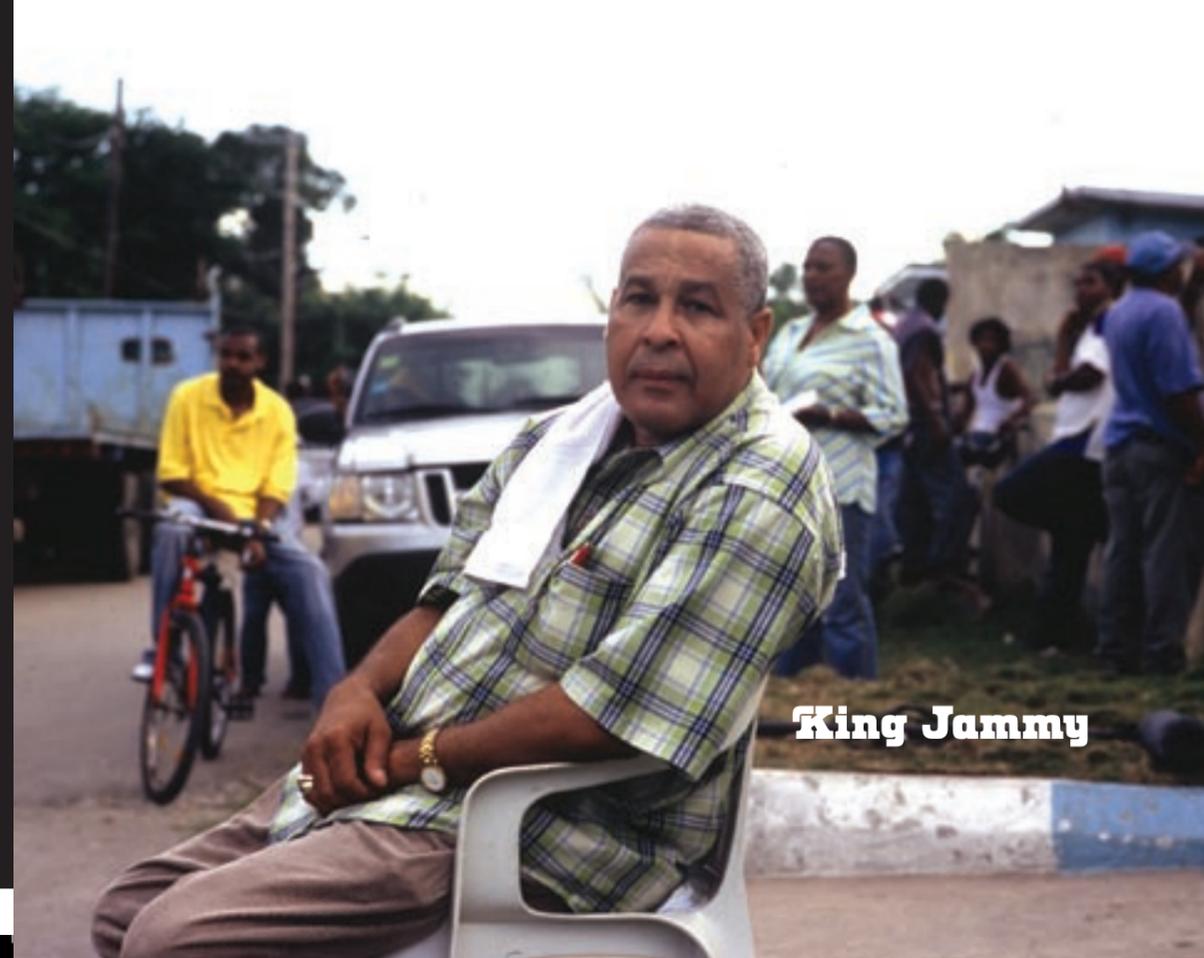
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## King Jammy

# Comp Reviews 3.07



## DIAMONDS 07 JOHN DIGWEED MSTRKRFT

Portland, OR - Rose Land Theatre	3/1/2007
San Francisco, CA - Ruby Sky	3/2/2007
Los Angeles, CA - The Vanguard	3/3/2007
San Diego, CA - Belo	3/4/2007
Phoenix, AZ - Axis/Radius	3/7/2007
Las Vegas, NV - Jet	3/8/2007
Minneapolis, MN - Myth	3/9/2007
Denver, CO - Vinyl	3/10/2007
St. Louis, MO - Dantes	3/13/2007
Houston, TX - Warehouse Live	3/15/2007
Austin, TX - SPIN	3/16/2007
Dallas, TX - Karma	3/17/2007
New Orleans, LA - Ampersand	3/18/2007
Miami, FL (WMC) - Pawn Shop	3/20/2007
Atlanta, GA - Blue	3/27/2007
Nashville, TN - Club Play	3/28/2007
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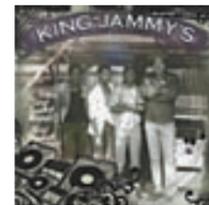


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### JUST A SMALL, EIGHT-DISC TASTER OF DANCEHALL'S PREEMINENT

**KING JAMMY**  
SELECTORS CHOICE VOLUMES 1-4  
VP Records/US/8CD-DVD

If Sleng Teng were the only track King Jammy had ever produced, his place in dancehall history would be cemented forever. That riddim, created on a Casio keyboard, single-handedly ushered in the digital dancehall age in 1985. Over his version of Tempo, one of the most popular riddims from the nascent stages of the digital era, Johnny Osbourne sings: "None of dem a sound like Jammy's/None of dem a sound like we." In those two lines, he distills what all of Jamaica (and much of the world) would come to accept as fact: The genre has only one true king and his name is Jammy.

An eight-disc set of almost any other producer's work would most likely be exhaustive and/or rife with filler. But even for the world of reggae—in which up to 100 singles can come out per week—Jammy's body of work is prolific. This ambitious set provides a sizable, but far from complete, overview of his massive oeuvre. Brimming with impossibly huge riddims like Sleng Teng, Shank I Shek, Sara, Stalag, Agony, Heavenless, Who She Love, Kuff, Far East, and Punnany, the collection also showcases the talents of the countless singers and deejays who have voiced at Jammy's legendary studio in Waterhouse, Kingston, among them Wayne Smith, Sanchez, Pinchers, Frankie Paul, Ninja Man, Cocoa T, Shabba Ranks, and Flourgon.

Many of the riddims in the collection have been revived time and again as the backing tracks to huge hits; I-Wayne's "Can't Satisfy Her" was built on an update of Jammy's Father Jungle Rock riddim, for example. Punnany—also known as "the Jamaican national anthem"—has been used dozens and dozens of times, and Sleng Teng has probably been voiced over more than any other riddim, with the possible exception of Real Rock. Jammy's biggest productions are, of course, well documented on these discs, but even diehard fans may find themselves surprised by just how many anthems he is responsible for.

Sprinkled in among the relentless parade of hits are several cover tunes. In keeping with a time-honored Jamaican tradition, artists choose somewhat suspect songs to cover and then render new versions without a trace of irony. Leroy Gibbons tackles Diana Ross' "I'm Missing You" over the Storm riddim, Lisa Stansfield's "Been Around the World" gets remade by Echo Minott over a stutter-filled rendition of Punnany, and Frankie Paul scores a monster hit with a cover of Jefferson Starship's "Sara" over the riddim of the same name. But Paul outdoes himself in the "odd choices" category with his medley-style remake of

"Head to Toe" by Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam; he throws in verses from Cameo's "Word Up" and snippets of "Isn't She Lovely" by Stevie Wonder for good measure.

As an added bonus, the set comes with an hour-long DVD—*King at the Controls: The King Jammy Story*—filled with interviews with the man himself, his family (sons Jam 2, John John, and Baby G are all successful producers), Wayne Smith, Elephant Man, Risto Benji, Bunny Lee, Junior Cat, and Ninja Man, who is seen in a heated lyrical battle with Bunny General (which a laughing Jammy takes in from astride his bicycle). The DVD also details the stories behind some of his biggest productions, including firsthand accounts from Wayne Smith and Jammy about the creation of Sleng Teng.

It is no overstatement to say that King Jammy is the most important producer in all of dancehall music. If you have even a casual interest in the genre, this set is absolutely essential.  
*Ross Hogg*



## 8-Bit Weapon

### 8-BIT OPERATORS

Astralwerks/US/CD

Unlike just about every Kraftwerk tribute record to date, *8-Bit Operators* is the modern (well, throwback-modern) response to the producers and bands who have failed to pay proper homage to machine music's innovators. Armed with custom-made 8-bit analog gadgets (most of which were created by the artists themselves), producers from 8-Bit Weapon to Sweden's Role Model to Nullsleep demonstrate their own blends of chip-rock—stuff that's amped enough to make the German computer kings hack their own Nintendos and hop back into the studio. Between 8-Bit Weapon's attention to melody and crunch on their studios and precise version of "Spacelab" and Nullsleep's repetitive, morphine-*Tetris* take on "The Model," this tribute accomplishes far more than reinventing Kraftwerk songs with tweaked Commodores; it truly illustrates how exponentially the chip scene has grown. This is computer love. *Fred Miketa*



### BERLIN INSANE IV

Pale/GER/CD

Still finding ways to mix rock and techno elements together in a post-electro (clash) world, the Berliners featured on *Insane IV* manage to keep much of their material surprisingly fresh. Though a few tracks do rely too heavily on hackneyed themes (anarchy, androgyny), standouts such as Grizzly's "Dich" and Planningtorock's "Local Foreigner" take the fun and mayhem of the previous compilations into truly experimental realms. And to tell you the truth, even the more clichéd tracks are fun, in a pure dancefloor kind of way. A good find for someone with no Adult. in their collection. *Alexander Posell*

### BLACK STROBE: A REMIX SELECTION

Playlouder/UK/CD

Parisian producers Arnaud Rebotini and Ivan Smaghe (a.k.a. Black Strobe) show the world their remix handiwork on this 10-track collection. Referring to themselves as the "dark side of disco," these guys let rip with their throbbing take on Tiefschwarz's "Ghost Track" while injecting Depeche Mode's "Something to Do" with serious sonic amphetamines. Like many tech-heavy mixes, the repetition, at times, becomes grating (a 10-minute-plus remix of Bloc Party?). The tightest track is the only original, an excellent, block party-rockin' "Shining Bright Star," perfect for that next gay biker-house gig they play. *Derek Beres*

### BONG-RA VS. SICKBOY: SHOTGUN WEDDING 5

Violent Turd/NZ/CD

2007 is the new 1991. Bong-Ra and Sickboy revisit the roots of UK 'ardcore on the fifth installment of Kid 606's impeccable *Shotgun Wedding* series, mashing up every brilliant tune from the day. Bong-Ra stays pretty faithful—no Shitmat-esque noodling, just the best breakdowns and buildups of 45-plus great tunes chopped just the way you want 'em. Sickboy raves up a wider (and slightly cheesier) selection butting Rednex vs. Vengaboys vs. Sean Paul vs. Busta vs. what-have-you. A glorious trip down memory lane that's still pretty ass-kicking—20% ironic, 80% 'ardcore; you know the score. *Matt Earp*

### CABINET CLASSICS & UNRELEASED

Plus 8/CAN/CD

Richie Hawtin's appreciation for the hardened techno output of Berlin's Cabinet label runs so deep that he decided to showcase the highlights on his own Plus 8 imprint. Whether it's the early rarities of Compass and Cab Drivers, or the unreleased hammerings of DJ Trike, Todd Bodine, and Daniel P, what you get with this comp is a payload of balls-to-the-wall techno that extends a firm middle-digit to anything even remotely resembling a DSP plug-in. This is techno done the hardware way—909 to the bone, with an analog soul that transcends time. *Doug Morton*

### DAVE CLARKE PRESENTS REMIXES & RARITIES: 1992-2005

Music Man/BEL/CD

After a nearly peerless 18-year career as a DJ and producer, it's clear that UK techno wunderkind Dave Clarke remains firmly and lovingly chained to his decks. His newest remix collection injects sweeping techno force into pop ditties from Zombie Nation to Moby, clearly aimed at the sweaty middle of writhing dancefloor masses. Clarke's remix of The Chemical Brothers' "Chemical Beats" delightfully roughens the original track's slick dubby grooves; his New Order remix of "Everything's Gone Green" delivers Clarke's macho signature 4/4 beats, pummeling listeners into an upbeat techno frenzy. *Janet Tzou*

### DJ HELL: MISCH MASCH

Fine./UK/CD

Ask Munich-based DJ Hell what best complements a dandy on the decks and the scarf-clad International DeeJay Gigolo might easily respond, "Nothing *too* constrictive." For this is the unspoken mantra of Hell's two discs of sleek mixes and remixes. Even at his most squelchy—Litteron's "Machine 1," Huntemann's "37," Dave Clarke's "Dirtbox"—Hell flows more flirty than feisty, save perhaps for his electro-haus take on Johannes Heil and Human Resource. Hell's selections (Äme, B12, Chelonis R. Jones, Justice vs. Simian) function more as searchlights than strobe lights, panning rhythmically rather than buffeting erratically. *Tony Ware*

### GOLDFRAPP: WE ARE GLITTER

Mute/US/CD

Say what you will about the sensuous nature of Goldfrapp, but this comp is about as close to an instant classic as you can get. Far from a singular club-ready vision, *We Are Glitter* finds the vintage disco-heavy DFA boys poised alongside the moodiness of Múm and the gnarly distortion of Shitkatapult's T. Raumschmiere. In other words, Goldfrapp is subtly becoming everyone's favorite band. It goes without saying that Carl Craig's and Tiefschwarz's mixes triumph with two mind-splitting cosmic journeys for the floor. Goldfrapp just got a shitload darker and sexier. *Fred Miketa*

### KITSUNÉ MAISON COMPILATION 3

Kitsuné/FRA/CD

Although a good portion of the artists on this third label comp from Paris' Kitsuné imprint hail from the US, its overall feel is invariably French. Between the wild-eyed disco bangers (and I mean bangers) by Fox n' Wolf and Simian Mobile Disco, to lo-fi pop remixes ranging from Soulwax chopping up The Gossip to Van She's synthetic reinterpretation of Klaxons' "Gravity's Rainbow," Kitsuné seems to be campaigning for party label of 2007. Even the borderline-indie pop tracks by bands like Oh No! Oh My! can't slow the mix down. *Fred Miketa*

### LET'S LAZERTAG SOMETIME

Tigerbeat6/US/CD

It's been awhile since Tigerbeat6 released tasteless, socially irresponsible music. Here, Puzzleweasel's "Taliban Terrorist Training" spews out busted drum machines and samples of people screaming from terrorist attacks—sorta like a Fox News report aired at dinnertime. Fortunately, most of the TB6 Class of '06 graduates with honors here. Top of the class is Phon's robotic ghetto-tech, followed tightly by White Williams' alarm-clock AOR pop. Another honorable mention is the Soft Pink Truth remix of Eats Tapes' "Techno in the Bush I Era." *Cameron Macdonald*

### JUSTIN MARTIN AND JOHNNY FIASCO: OM WINTER SESSIONS

OM/US/2CD

OM delivers a two-fer for the holiday, featuring table-mavens S.F.'s Justin Martin and Chicago's Johnny Fiasco. *Winter Sessions'* Disc One is Martin's debut mix, and he delivers an accessible underground sampling with tracks from Skye, Mike Monday, and labelmate Andy Caldwell. Disc Two sees Fiasco veering from typical West Coast bounce, instead going deep and chilly. So if you couldn't get down to the OM Winter Sessions tour, these discs will do. *Stacy Meyn*

### PEANUT BUTTER WOLF PRESENTS: STONES THROW—TEN YEARS

Stones Throw/US/CD

Last year, Stones Throw achieved a rare feat for an indie hip-hop label—it reached its tenth anniversary. To celebrate, label founder PB Wolf presents a collection of 25 of its most riveting tracks from Madvillain, M.E.D., Koushik, and others. But this isn't just a "best of" disc. Despite the absence of a few classics (namely Rasco's "Take It Back Home"), this compilation thoroughly documents how much Stones Throw's roster has grown in size and sonic variety. From the Lootpack's freestyle marathon "Whenimondamic" to Aloe Blacc's soulful slow jam "Arrive," nearly every inclusion provides a fresh outlook. *Max Herman*

### POKER FLAT VOL. 5: BEATS N BLUFFS

Poker Flat/GER/2CD

Here to show off what the Poker Flat crew has been up to, Steve Bug compiles a CD containing the essence of this past season's top releases as well as a taste of what the future has to offer. From quirky soundscapes and funk-driven hip shakers to trippy bare minimalism and skeletal arrangements, the album covers a full range of what forward-thinking electronic music sounds like. As a bonus, a second CD containing a mix from Martin Landsky arranges released and unreleased material from Trentemøller, Martini Bros, Guido Schneider, and Tazmann into a cutting-edge minimal masterpiece. *Praxis*

### SCI.FI.HI.FI\_03: ALEX SMOKE

Soma/UK/CD

With previous installments from Ewan Pearson and Luciano, Soma's Sci.Fi.Hi.Fi seems to be evolving into a must-have mix series. What the host label's own Alex Menzies' contribution lacks in straight-forward immediacy, it more than makes up for in intrigue: That a recording project inspired by a curio shop in the midst of a Swedish forest (Porn Sword Tobacco) begins *Sci.Fi.Hi.Fi\_03* is telling but Smoke also deploys the likes of Burial, Rhythm & Sound, Model 500, and Troy Pierce in a skilled, measured manner. A trio of Menzies' own tracks (as Alex Smoke and Quixote) make for a nice finale. *David Hemingway*

### SOUTHPORT WEEKENDER CLASSICS

Endulge/UK/CD

In a music-crit world, where the term "genre-defining" is a cliché, the biannual Southport Weekender festival still begs use of the phrase. Until now, there hasn't been a particular musical artifact to point to when someone asks what Southport's music is. Joe Claussell's spiritual house? Norman Jay's crate-diggin' disco? *Classics* proves it to be all of the above: from Gloria Scott's rare soul masterpiece "Too Much Love Making" through house touchstones by Night Writers and Masters at Work. This comp is a perfect illustration of Southport's influence on dance music, and contemporary music in general. *Justin Hopper*

### TECTONIC PLATES

Tectonic/UK/CD

Bristol's Tectonic dubstep label brings fans a tale of two sounds on two discs. Compiled singles by staple artists like MRK1, Pinch, Loefah, Cyrus, and Omen are alternately sparse and restrained, manic and bombastic. Disc One of the set offers individual tracks, while the other is a seamless mix with only a few repeats. DQ1's wobbly soundclash-inspired hit "Wear the Crown" and Digital Mystikz's bleak "Molten" hold it down for the minimal steppers, while Omen's "Full Metal Jacket" and Vex'd give you a dose of *dutty* subs. Everybody dance the Earthquake. *Tomas Palermo*

### THE GLIMMERS

FABRICLIVE 31

MARCO CAROLA

FABRIC 31

Fabric/UK/CD

The Fabric series has been around for so long that just thinking about its many installments will date you. Luckily, it's also known for inspiring a certain daring quality in its feature DJs. The Glimmers' eclectic contribution is, if nothing else, a crowd-pleaser: non-electronic fans will enjoy remixes of Roxy Music and Freddie Mercury, while house heads will savor Neal Howard's percussive, old-school deep-house beauty "The Gathering." Those seeking a more underground vibe will prefer the Marco Carola

installment, which showcases his particular penchant for funky minimalism in techno and tech-house. *Janet Tzou*

### LOUIE VEGA: MIX THE VIBE—FOR THE LOVE OF KING STREET

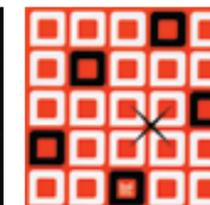
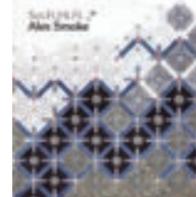
King Street/US/2CD

Louie Vega has the pleasure of being able to rest on his laurels as one of house music's preeminent figures, but does he? Of course not. He unleashes countless mix discs, and this one is just as solid as the last. Disc One finds the master showcasing tunes from his Cielo residency (by Peven Everett, Dennis Ferrer, and Kerri Chandler). But fans of the classics will probably skip to Disc Two, full of mid-to-late-'90s choons from Mondo Grosso ("Souffles H (King Street Club Mix)"), Big Moses ("Brighter Days"), and more. Nice! *Derek Grey*

### WHAT'S HAPPENING IN PERNAMBUCO

Luaka Bop/US/CD

If you're as musically adventurous as you claim, you'll love this comp of off-the-beaten-track Brazilian music from a little-known region somewhat removed from the São Paulo/Rio route. Traditional-styled songs mutate before your ears into vocoderized hip-hop bass drops; bossa nova scratch-fests and punky samba throwdowns abound, as well as all the super-duper syncopated percussion you'd expect from South America. This ain't your parents' Tropicália or your basic B'zil jazz album. Yet for all its electric, youthful intensity, a mellow, soulful flavor rolls through this inspired collection. *Eric K. Arnold*



## Dirt Crew

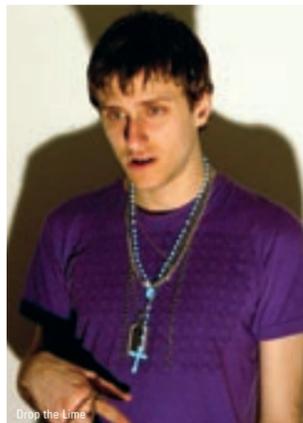
### DIRT CREW PRESENTS: COLLECTION 01

Dirt Crew/GER/CD

Berlin's Dirt Crew loudly proclaims the gospel of dance on its second-year-anniversary compilation, where two discs of the label's best singles and new cuts further convince listeners these guys are worth paying attention to. Disc One showcases Dirt Crew artists at their finest and dirtiest, be it Dominik Eulberg remixing the dancefloor weapon "Largo" or rumbling tech-house tracks from the likes of Drum Cult and 2020 Soundsystem. Disc Two wanders into the moodier, even more minimal territory of Dirt Crew sub-label Players Paradise; newcomers like Mash and Thughfucker deliver tightly arranged house compositions that quietly compliment Disc One's heavier numbers. With nary a weak track on either disc, it's likely the crew will soon hold the undivided attention of minimal techno fans around the globe—and maybe even get them to dance. *Jennifer Marston*



**Basic Needs**  
By **Kid Kameleon**  
LOW-END NECESSITIES, FROM RAGGA TO DUBSTEP AND BEYOND



Drop the Lime



Mathhead

I'm beginning to sound like a broken record but once again, it's time to announce two great new releases from **Drop the Lime**. Chalk it up to the two amazing nights I spent hearing him play in Brooklyn—at **The Captain** and **Shark's** Mad Suspect party at Savalas, and at Trouble and Bass, with crewmembers **Mathhead**, **Zach Shadetek**, and **XLBBF's** own **Star Eyes**. I got an earful of Flamin Hotz 03, out now and available at Turntable Lab, on which DTL and Mathhead slice up everything from "Ridin' Dirty" to the *Magnum P.I.* theme and stone-wash it in classic B-more breaks, creating a hip-hop/rave/B-more hybrid. All six tracks are guaranteed to obliterate the dancefloor. If you missed 'em, still check out Flamin Hotz 01 (some bumpin' *baile* funk) and 02 (R&B/B-more hybrids from **Curtis Vodka**). The second release from DTL comes under the new name **Sky City Rising** (also the name of the EP on Broklyn Beats), and it finds him diving into much deeper territory, closer to the pure dubstep of DMZ but with his own twist. Lyric-less, claustrophobic, and truly heavy, this is the music of dark, ugly, rainy Brooklyn nights.

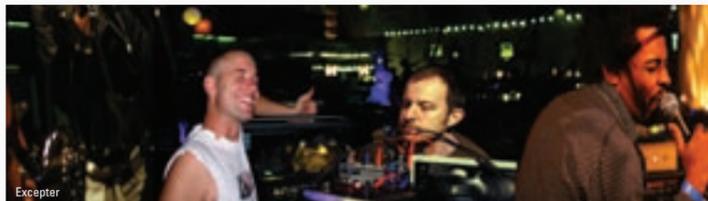
On a similar vibe to the Mad Suspect parties, **DJ Shir Khan** has teamed up with **Audioporno** to release five super-fun B-more and Euro-crunk funk joints on the *Ghettotronica* EP. **Justice** goes up against **Method Man**, **M.I.A.** scrambles with **Art of Noise**, **Spankrock** gets in a tangle with some New Orleans jazz... you get the picture. Shir Khan is one of Berlin's hardest working and most entertaining DJs in any of the dozen genres he plays, and he's got a ton of mixes at [www.dj-shirkhan.de](http://www.dj-shirkhan.de).

As soon as you can, grab the latest release from **DJ Pinch's** Tectonic label. TEC 10 contains four stunning tracks from **Moving Ninja**, an artist I knew nothing about other than "Murky," the one superb track he had on Pinch's *Tectonic Plates* double-CD. The release ("Blackout," with "THX," "Kemancheh," and "Uranium" bringing up the rear) is metallic and ringing, full of echoing sounds (think the old videogame *Marathon*)—minimal at times but still heavy with low end. It's not a straight-forward banger, which is a real stretch for the label after so many big hits, but it just makes me love Pinch all the more for taking the risk. Visit [www.movingninja.com](http://www.movingninja.com) for more samples from this big name to watch in '07.

Finally, it's a red-letter day when a new Shockout record comes forth from Oakland's Tigerbeat6 stable; this one's been rattling around for a couple years, but it's well worth the wait. The mighty **Ninja Man** (of "Murder Dem" fame) goes head to head with **Knifehandchop** for a dancehall rave-up in **South Rakkas Crew** style. **Modeselektor** takes a shot, too, and turns the master into a robot, adding their trademark buzzing synths and half-time/double-time drumbeats. Unstoppable. Label boss **Kid606** is reportedly fresh out of vocalists, so if you're a fan of the Shockout sound, MySpace him and tell him to go back to Jamaica for some more!



**After Silence**  
By **Martin De Leon**  
THE OUTER ORBITS OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC



Excepter



Panda Bear

This month, I look to people who use beat machines for imaginary pop. And I'm doing this particularly for **XLBBF's** egghead readers who know when to put down that Xbox and pick up that Faust record.

Let's start with **DJ Foundation**, who drops Koran samples and porno snippets into his single "(Have They Not Heard) God Is Dead" (Metal Postcard), which is perfect for that Pat Robertson get-together you've been planning. Sinister synths and an old Muslim man's voice hover atop the tip-tap of a soft beat on this excellent single—worth getting your hands chopped off for.

Animal Collective's **Panda Bear** cuts out the folk and joins forces with Brooklyn's experimental elite, **Excepter**, on their formidable split 12". "Carrots" (Paw Tracks) finds the Bear getting all Kraut-y on a seven-minute opus that places melodic vocals on top of cut-up, lo-fi beats. Excepter goes for the gold on "KKKKK," finding their inner-Steve Reich with five brilliant ambient sections.

Not so quiet is New Jersey combo **Dälek**, whose noisy rap on their *Streets All Amped* EP (Ad Noiseam) comes bullet-riddled and angry. Gothic-throwback beats by Oktopus blanket MC Dälek's smart flow ("Ascension") proving that this four-song EP is probably their greatest achievement.

Laptop composer and guitarist **Fennesz** covers the Rolling Stones and The Beach Boys on *Fennesz Plays* (Mego). The three-minute "Paint It Black" is slow, difficult, and beautiful—unlike the first time around. Equally gorgeous, "Don't Talk" takes the hurt of the original and shreds it with countless glitches and a haunting melody. Covers should always be this crazy.

Britain's **Adem** might not be the most unique producer, but he's still pretty awesome. On "Launch Yourself," the dope indie-pop single from his second album, *Love and Other Planets* (Domino), the former **Four Tet** member comes with fine vocals and childlike wonder. On the remixes, **Hot Chip** goes '70s R&B, Four Tet delivers a gamelan glitch track, and **Thomas Eriksen** takes Adem's vocals to the dancefloor.

Monika Enterprise, the groundbreaking label from Berlin, has been putting out avant-garde electronic sounds (many of them made by women) since 1997; they've released over 50 records, from the folky beats of **Michaela Melian** to the electro-vocales of **Barbara Morgenstern** to the techno-pop of (James) **Figurine**. Now they tackle acoustic singer-songwriters with **Milenasong**, whose excellent EP, *Can't Tape Forever*, is terrific for its lo-fi textures alone.

Those Germans can't stop, won't stop. Hamburg's **Ndrü** makes beats that border on minimal techno and can't stand still. His *Connected* EP (Perspectiv) is filled with bangers such as "Pink Peonies Forest," which starts off with slow synths and builds into sweaty cities of sentiment.

Mexico City label Sound Sister keeps putting out white-hot records. From "toy pop" proponents **Casio Commander** to ambient producer **E. Lebleu**, the label's highlight is laptop-punk band **Maniqui Lazer**, whose great *I Learn Everything on TVEP* just happens to sound like Throbbing Gristle. Hear them at [www.maniquilazer.com](http://www.maniquilazer.com).

So, what was I saying about Faust records and videogames? Well, whatever...

**COACHELLA**  
COACHELLA VALLEY MUSIC AND ARTS FESTIVAL  
INDIO CALIFORNIA



FRIDAY APRIL 27

**Björk**  
**Interpol** • the **Jesus and Mary Chain** • **Arctic Monkeys**  
**Jarvis Cocker** • **Sonic Youth** • **Faithless** • **DJ Shadow** • **Peeping Tom** • **Brazilian Girls**  
**Peaches** • **Felix Da Housecat** • **Rufus Wainwright** • **Stephen Marley** featuring **Jr. Gong** • **Nickel Creek** • **We Are Scientists**  
**Digitalism** • **Tokyo Police Club** • **Comedians of Comedy** • **El-P** • **Julietta Venegas** • **Gogol Bordello** • **Circa Survive** • **Silversun Pickups**  
**Gillian Welch** • **Tilly and the Wall** • **Benny Benassi** • **Amy Winehouse** • **David Guetta** • **Noisettes** • **Evil Nine** • **Busdriver** • **Brother Ali**

SATURDAY APRIL 28

**Red Hot Chili Peppers**  
the **Arcade Fire** • **Tiësto** • the **Decemberists**  
the **Good, the Bad** and the **Queen** • **Travis** • **Kings of Leon** • **Gotan Project** • the **Rapture**  
**LCD Soundsystem** • **Blonde Redhead** • the **New Pornographers** • the **Black Keys** • **!!!** • **Regina Spektor** • **Hot Chip** • **MSTRKRFT**  
**Ozomatli** • **Ghostface Killah** • **Fountains of Wayne** • **Jack's Mannequin** • **Peter Bjorn** and **John** • **VNV Nation** • **Sparklehorse**  
the **Nightwatchman** • **Roky Erickson** & the **Explosives** • **Cornelius** • **CocoRosie** • **Andrew Bird** • the **Frames** • the **Fratellis**  
**Justice** • **Bojones** • **Pharoahe Monch** • **Fields** • the **Cribs** • **Girl Talk** • **Mike Relm** • **DJ Heather** • **Pop Levi** • **Yeva**

SUNDAY APRIL 29

**Rage Against the Machine**  
**Manu Chao** Radio Bemba Sound System • **Air** • **Happy Mondays** • **Willie Nelson**  
**Paul Van Dyk** • **Placebo** • **Kaiser Chiefs** • **Damien Rice** • the **Roots** • **Crowded House**  
**Explosions in the Sky** • **Konono No.1** • **Soulwax** • **Richie Hawtin** • **Infected Mushroom** • **Lily Allen** • **Amos Lee** • **José González**  
**Spank Rock** • **Rodrigo Y Gabriela** • **Against Me!** • **Ratatat** • **Junior Boys** • the **Feeling** • the **Kooks** • **CSS** • **Klaxons** • **Tapes 'n Tapes**  
**Teddybears** • **Lupe Fiasco** • **Mando Diao** • **Grizzly Bear** • **Mika** • the **Coup** • the **Avett Bros.** • **Anathallo** • **Fair to Midland**

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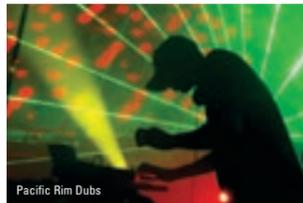


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**Broken Business**  
By Peter Nicholson  
FUTURE JAZZ AND BUSTED BEATS



There are a few labels out there whose releases can always find a place in my crate, and Sonar Kollektiv has got to be at the top of this short list (even if they are criminally slow in getting me promos, *nudge nudge*). While in recent months the SK team has been focusing on more house-ish ventures, there are always a few gems that get the beat switched up nicely. Such is the case with the b-side of Slope's "Keepin' It Up," another deliberate remix masterpiece from **Henrik Schwarz**, who turns the slightly skanking house original into a sprawling, mid-tempo jam full of understated electric piano and ultra-deep bass. In a similarly moody vein is "Listen to the Drums" by **Outlines**, which takes a tiny loop and builds it into a big track full of mellow vocals, congas, and plenty of anticipation—the Clingancourt mix is my fave. Also from SK is the monster tune "Deux Mille Deux" from **Sygiare**, with massive, call-and-response Afrobeat-esque vocals, descending chords, and a reckless party vibe.

Now that I've caught up with my German backlog, it's time to move on up the continent to Finland, where the drummer for **The Five Corners Quintet**, **Teddy Rok**, has a new project by the name of **The Stance Brothers**. Not surprisingly, "Steve McQueen" and "Jay's Lament" both have kit work cinched down tight—the homage to the *Bullitt* star is a hyper-cool mix of vibes and snares, and the sadder number a syrupy-slow soulful jam.

As Monty Python used to say, "And now, for something completely different!"—an EP from **Pacific Rim Dubs** (otherwise known as Simon from Palmskin Productions.) It's got a bit of everything, from disco to more minimal styles, but the track I'm loving is "Ain't My Loved One," which pairs wicked acid with a hand-clapping, rump-shaking funk groove.

Been a minute since I tooted the horn for good ol' MdCL (a.k.a. **Mark de Clive-Lowe**). The Antipodean antidote to boring beats is up to his usual goodness on **Real's** "Never Never" on the adorably named Smooch Records—there's a nicely rolling, live feel to his pair of remixes with Real's Louise Pollock on the mic, a strutting vibe smoothly matching with a nasty analog synths-versus-brass break.

If you've been wondering what **Spacek** has been up to, look no further than the lead single from **Stephanie McKay's** upcoming album. A lurching, squelching slab of sexy funk, Spacek's take on "Tell It Like It Is" is a subtle improvement on the original, while still keeping McKay's glorious belting front and center.

Like bookends, some cuts will work at both the beginning and end of the night; such is the glassy-smooth, Teddy Pendergrass-sampling "Browns" from **TRUSME**, out now on Still Music. Like buttah, baby—its swirled keys and deadly simple bass are just the way to get the night started. Or calm them kids down and send them home, which is what we've gotta do now. Good night, y'all!



**Future Jazz Guest Reviews:**  
**Markus Enochson**

Stockholm native Markus Enochson's debut LP for Sonar Kollektiv, *Night Games*, has that particular SK flair: there's nothing predictable about it. Flecks of tech-house meld with warm, jazzy synths, soulful vocals, and shuffling rhythms while beats collide from all angles; it's clearly the work of a seasoned DJ and remixer, more ready for the dancefloor than most long-players you'll hear all year. On top of regular production work, Enochson maintains a steady diet of remixing, too, taking on Rules of the Deep and Quasimode on Raw Fusion next. Here we tap him for some of the tracks you might catch him playing at his Snafu residency in Aberdeen, Scotland. *Will Tobin*  
www.audiobuff.se

**DR. J (FROM 1LUV) & PHIL ASHER FEAT. AMALIA**  
"THE LITTLE THINGS"

white/UK/12  
London music don Phil Asher busted out a lot of housier bits in 2006. For '07 he brings back the true sounds. "The Little Things (You Do To Me)" is all about the little things: a well-weighted balance between sublime grooves and addictive vocals, with an interesting soundscape.

**LARS BARTKUH**  
"DIMENSION"

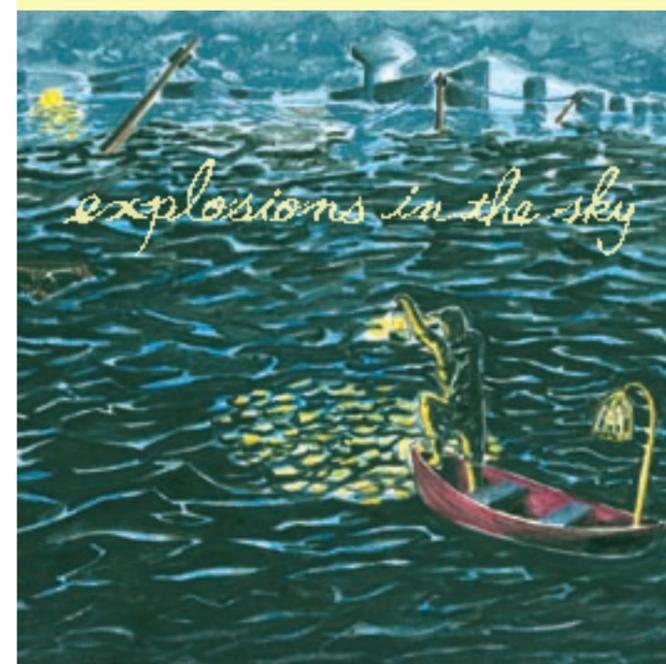
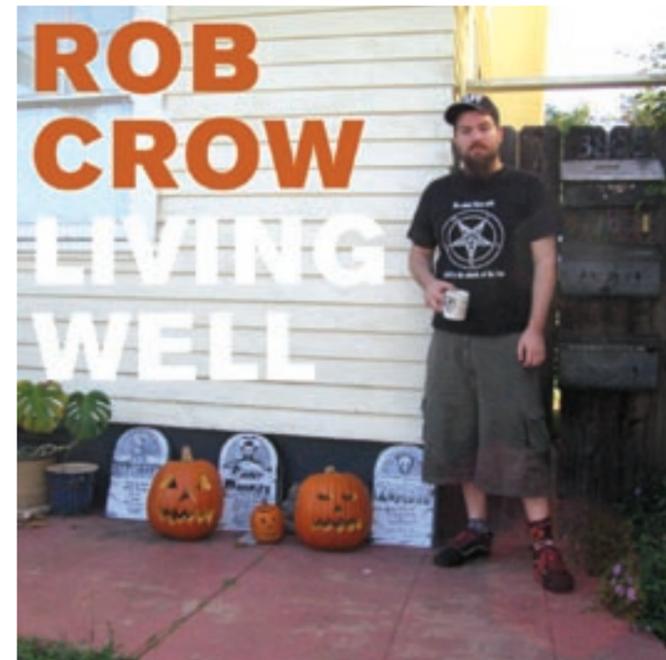
white/GER/12  
It's been along time since I heard anything from Lars or the other guys from the Needs crew, but Lars delivers for sure. Chord scales that will make grown men and women weep and rejoice, whether they are listening to broken, house, or techno all night long. This screams "WMC track" if I ever heard one. Anthem?

**LOVE BIRDS**  
"MODERN STALKING"

Winding Road/UK/12  
Written by Sebastian Doering and Vincenzo, this one starts off with a boogie bass and classic chord action but in a real downtempo way, which surely will get people interested. It follows with full bass strings to set the mood. I can definitely hear myself dropping this in the late-hour sets when people are in full chill mode.

**FUNKY TRANSPORT**  
"LOVE COME SAVE ME"

white/UK/12  
Funky Scotsman Iain McPherson brings out some atonalities that make me only imagine what he was doing before putting it all together. This is straight-up outrageous fun—crazy, guitar-strumming, FX'd dance music with an offbeat touch. Strings play out a melody that sets the mood for those late nights at Snafu.



**ROB CROW:** Pinback frontman goes solo and makes the best Pinback album that Pinback never made.

**EXPLOSIONS IN THE SKY:** The long-awaited new studio album. Limited edition 2xCD version includes remixes by FOUR TET, JESU, ADEM, and more. In stores February 20.



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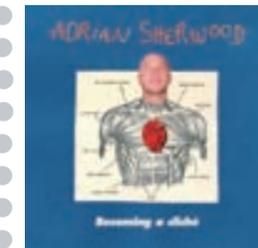
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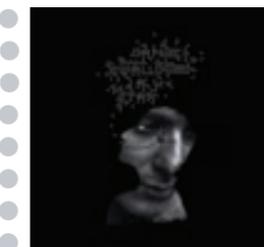
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**Bubble Metropolis**  
By **NL Tronik**  
TECHNO: MINIMAL, BANGING, AND BEYOND



I'm in constant need of new music. I get bored easily. And whether it's vinyl, CD or MP3s, my search for futuristic hotness never ends. This month, I've gone ahead and plucked 10 techno burners you need to find for yourself right away, starting with **Hannes Teichmann's** "Jager 07" (Festplatten). This three-track 12" consistently impresses. It features a **Dave DK** remix, which zaps and blasts its way through your eardrums—similar to the original version, but with a more concentrated groove throughout.

West Coast techno has a lot of groove, and this month's finest example comes courtesy of a split 12" from L.A.'s **Drumcell** and **Acid Circus**. *The System Error* EP (Droid Behavior) features two tracks, "Brain\_Reck" and "Minimal Junk." Each cut comes with a remix, the former a syncopated number by **Apendics Shuffle** and the latter by **Jason Emsley**.

Detroit Underground is a fledgling U.S./Canadian techno label fit to blow sky high in 2007. Be on the lookout for their latest release, the rugged and raw *Big Beaver Road* EP, which compiles music from **Phon.o** and **Litwinenko**. Phon.o's contributions, "Pimpin' Tintin" and "Booty Lickin'," are straight-up nasty ghetto-tech, and if I'm not mistaken, **DJ Funk** dropped one of them during a recent DJ set here in S.F. And don't miss Litwinenko's phased and flanged mid-tempo jammy "Hit Me." The single also comes with two sets of locked grooves for late-night DJ trickery.

For a completely different set of tricks, you simply must get your hands on the super-limited *KIT 001* (Replhex) split-10", featuring experimental vibes from **Florian Hecker** and **Jeremy Simmonds** (a.k.a. **Voafosse**). It's really difficult to say what

their intent is. A piss-take at minimal music? To taunt fledgling producers? Who cares? By the time you read this, it could be for sale on eBay for an ungodly sum.

The surprise of the month goes to **The Nova Dream Sequence's** *Interpretations: Seven, Ten & Fourteen* (Compost). From none other than Philly's **King Britt** under a new alias, it's probably one of the toughest productions of his career. All three tracks are very solid, but check "Dream 10" on the b-side first.

Also on the deep minimal tip, check out **Feldah & Koba**. Their new offering, *Is Klar* (60 Sec), claims to have been recorded on the Mir space station. Had the Mir not plummeted to Earth six years ago, it coulda been true. This is spacey minimalism with a hint of funk—fans of **Gaiser**, look out.

I get the feeling that **Stephan Bodzin** must live in his studio. The intense rate at which this guy puts out tracks is a little frightening. Be sure to get his "Daytona Beach" 12" on Spiel-Zeug. My favorite is the title track, which I imagine would sound devastating at a Florida beach party, or maybe an outdoor circus? And if that's your sort of thing, keep an eye out for **Sascha Krohn's** new *Clowns in My Head* (Kiddaz.FM) release. This three-tracker is slightly abstract but very grooving. "Confused on the Dancefloor" should get your peeps moving!

Also on a somewhat whimsical tip is **Tomas Andersson's** upcoming *Mots Matsalen* EP (Bpitch Control). The title cut works a particular sound element up and down in modulation, and to interesting effect, while the groovy "Dubbel Problematik" on the b-side builds several atonal elements together to make a pure peak-time jacker.



**En Tu Casa**  
By **Nick Chacona**  
HOUSEKEEPING, FROM TECH AND MINIMAL TO DEEP AND TRADITIONAL



I'd like to start things off this time around with a nod to a true NY house music institution that is celebrating its 10-year anniversary. Promoted by John Davis, Body & Soul—the legendary Sunday-evening event that featured residents **Francois K**, **Danny Krivit**, and **Joaquin "Joe" Clausell**—began in 1997 at the historic venue Vinyl (which was formerly The Shelter and is now a condo development) and lasted as a weekly for six straight years. The crew has kept the vibe alive, reforming for special reunion events at NYC's Central Park SummerStage and, more recently, for their special anniversary party at MoMA's Warm Up series at PS1 in Queens, where more than 7000 people turned up!

Also turning 10 is the Vancouver-based imprint Nordic Trax. Known for a smooth and tasteful palette of releases from artists such as **Home & Garden**, **Gavin Froome**, **JT Donaldson**, **Pete Moss**, and **Morgan Page**, NT label boss **Luke McKeehan** has built a reputation for releasing truly progressive deep house that has kept them on the map. Planned for 2007 are singles releases from **Gawron Paris**, **Bryan Jones**, **Kelvin K**, and the debut album from **Jay Tripwire**.

Over in the land of GMT, Kickin' Music's almost double-decade-old house mainstay Slip 'n' Slide has some serious tunes raring to go. With a focus on CD releases, including the massive *Jazz in the House* series, the label seems poised to regain its footing as one of the UK's main US house purveyors. First up is a low-slung, ultra-sexy vocal cut by **Demarkus Lewis** and **John Griffin** entitled "Tell Me Why" that features three DL signature variations. This will be followed the re-release of the duet between **Q-Burn's Abstract Message** and Naked Music's **Lisa Shaw**, "This Time," and a brand new, chunky tech-house bomb from **Hippe** entitled "People."

If motorcycles and deep, soulful house are your thing, then you'll be in tune with the vibrations of Milano house dons **Harley & Muscle**. The boys have teamed up with i! Records veterans **Hanna**

and **Kevin Yost** for the release of "Deeper Love" (Superstar) from their *Decade of Truth* LP. Hanna takes a lower-BPM approach, for those who like it deep and chunky, while Kevin's go is definitely not what you'd expect from the master of the guitar-and-vibes combination. Also included are the original mix and an interesting mid-tempo mix by **Karu**, which utilizes the jerky quantization techniques employed by R&B production wiz Rodney Jerkins to push the track in a unique fashion.

On the techier side of things, 2007 looks to be a big year for the super-secret production outfit **Art of Tones** (I record on the same label and don't even know who they are!). With massive anticipation, the upcoming single "Praise" on 2020 Vision will very likely be one of the most danced-to songs of the summer. Pure tech-house production sensibilities, paired with a traditional early-'90s groove and an overwhelming amount of drama, make it almost irresistible for the nu-ravers.

And, finally, my vocal pick of the month goes to **Mark Grant** and **Russoul** for the Stevie Wonderesque "Guessin' Again" on Grant's Blackstone label. With a leisurely output, this will only be the fifth release for Blackstone. Many house vocals fall into the feel-good cliché that makes for a short shelf life, but the vivacity of Russoul's vocals conjures a natural, authentic aural reminiscence of one of soul's true masters, meaning that "Guessin' Again" has the potential to be a staple in many DJ boxes this year.



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## Apocalypse Wow By Roy Dank

TRAVERSING TIME AND SPACE IN SEARCH OF ODDBALL DANCE GOODIES

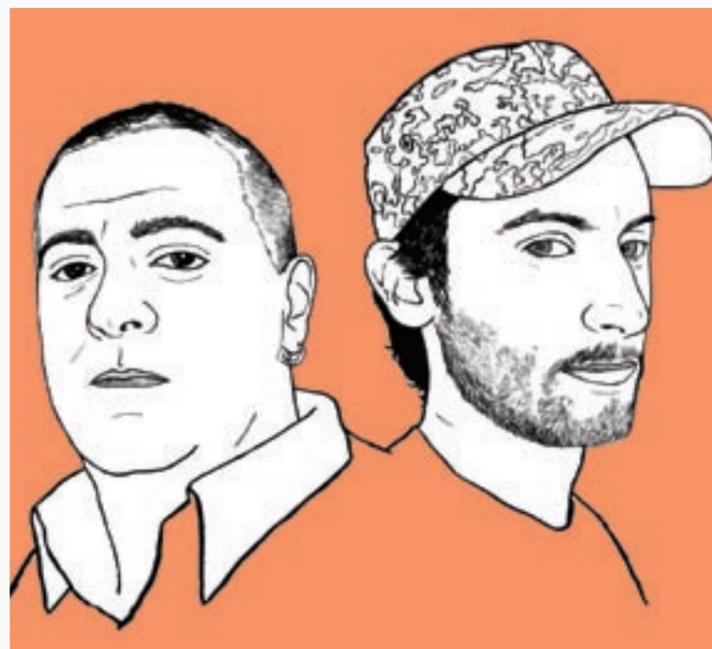


Two-thousand-sick proved to be just that—loads of great tunes by veterans and new talent alike, more and more DJs digging deeper and taking risks, and what I like to lovingly refer to as “The New Dance” really taking hold. And not just within the world of electronic dance music, but in the broader context of contemporary music in general. This seems to happen every few years or so, as various micro-genres develop bona fide communities and industries that support and perpetuate the music. But what differentiates The New Dance from other musical movements is that it draws from so many different areas, inspiring DJ-set creativity, but even more so in the studio. Big-draw jocks like **James Murphy**, **Trevor Jackson**, and **Optimo** play everything from disco to house to electro to techno to punk, old and new. It’s no wonder that the music they make is a reflection of such wildly disparate tastes.

I couldn’t be more stoked on this season’s offerings. There’s a couple of ginormously anticipated albums out before the end of the month, not the least of which is **Joakim**’s latest and greatest, *Monsters and Silly Songs* (1K7). Check your local listings for the man’s live shows, featuring the lanky Parisian himself on vocal duties with a proper band in tow. **LCD Soundsystem** drops their behemoth sophomore effort, *Sound of Silver* (Capitol). The first single, “North American Scum,” gets reworked by **Kris Menace** (of “Discopolis” fame) and the **DFA** duo themselves, naturally.

While we’re on the subject of the DFA, the label spreads its wings in 2007 with not only a new artist signing (the spectacularly raw **Prinzhorn Dance School**), but also the much-rumored sub-label Death From Abroad. Catchy name, eh? As you can probably guess, the New York powerhouse is taking a decidedly international tack, with singles in the can from the UK’s **Mock & Toof** and **Gucci Soundsystem** (a.k.a. **Ben Rymer** and **Riton**), and Japan’s **Altz** (of Bear Funk fame).

Back to Brooklyn, seemingly the busiest borough on the New Dance map, where disco stalwarts Rong take a flying leap into anthem territory with the second single from Fort Greene’s **Lee Douglas** (a.k.a. famed illustrator and *XLR8R* contrib Doug Lee). “New York Story” could well be this year’s “I Feel Space,” what with its sweeping synths and overwhelmingly ecstatic energy. Out in Bushwick, the band **Escort** has turned its attention to remix work. Expect full overhauls of **Tracey Thorn**’s “It’s All True” (the original was produced by the Voltron-like trio of **Darshan Jesrani**, **Ewan Pearson**, and **Sasse**) and electro-samba legends **Antena** for the burgeoning Permanent Vacation label. Let’s not forget Escort’s original jams, “Give It Up” and “Bright New Life,” the latter of which boasts an edit by none other than **Morgan Geist**. The Environ don is also readying both his long-awaited full-length and new project **Prime Time**, which is “influenced heavily by vintage samplers and the AT&T Long Lines building in Soho,” according to the man himself. Geist will also be releasing **Kelley Polar**’s as-yet-untitled follow-up to the critically acclaimed *Love Songs of the Hanging Gardens* (Environ). Across the East River in Manhattan, the electro-disco torch continues to burn as A Touch of Class drops the latest single from **Services**, with none other than **Zongamin** reeled in for remix duties. Time to start saving that allowance, kids!



## Oddball Dance Guest Reviews: Mock & Toof

You may not have heard the names Mock & Toof thrown about the dancefloor yet, but be prepared to: In the last couple of years, these London-based up-and-comers have been hard at work remixing the likes of Hot Chip, Scissor Sisters, Gomma, and The Juan MacLean (which helped them ink a little deal with the DFA’s new Death From Abroad label). Also worth seeking out is their re-edit of Madonna’s “Like a Virgin,” cheekily titled “Lycra Virgin,” which garnered them a shitload of MySpace friends. Between DJ and remixing gigs, Mock (a.k.a. Duncan Stump) runs the fledgling Tiny Sticks label, responsible for singles and re-rubs from Dondolo, Brennan Green, Shit Robot, and a slew of others. We tapped him for a quick taste of what’s to come from the oddball underground. *Ken Taylor*  
[www.myspace.com/mockandtoof](http://www.myspace.com/mockandtoof)

### THE EMPEROR MACHINE VERTICAL TONES AND HORIZONTAL NOISE PART 5 EP

DC Recordings/UK/12

You gotta love The Emperor. The man has that BBC Workshop thing going on, combined with the maximum amount of funk that’s probably allowed per individual living in Stafford. Lashings of analog richness are the order of the day, perfectly produced in a psychedelic, demented disco fashion. I’ve previously fantasized about him collaborating with Mr. Oizo—imagine the unimaginable results. The brand new track “Labocatocs” features here, with the outstanding album favorite “Rimramramrim” in a previously unheard extended form.

### LCD SOUNDSYSTEM SOUND OF SILVER

DFA-Capitol/US/CD

LCD has been a big influence on our sound. I’ve got a few tracks from the album and they kill. I get so jealous about those drums, those sounds, those toms that turn into tiny, clicking, reverb-drenched pops, those side-chained synths that pump the groove and move and shift into different forms, those bad-ass basslines. I’m trying hard to think of an act that has got me that excited recently about a new album.

### MR. PAULI VS. ALDEN TYRELL “LITTLE (SYD REMIX)”

Clone/NETH/12

Always had a soft spot for Clone/Viewlexx. The Dutch are great, aren’t they? *Woord!* This is the last of the *Box Jam* remix series, and sees French guy SYD remix Mr. Pauli and Alden Tyrell’s “Little” track. This is emotional, ever-so-slightly gay robo-disco that sounds like it was made by someone with a moustache (which can only be a good thing in my book). On the b-side you have two brand new Pauli tracks, and he does a convincing job of making them sound like they were made in 1984. Proper.

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**Read the Label**  
By Jesse "Orosco" Serwer  
HIP-HOP MIXTAPES, WHITE LABELS, AND SHIT



Whoop Kid



Thes One

Writing in October for the December year-end issue of *XLRR*, I dismissed 2006's hip-hop offerings as underwhelming but, as it turned out, the fourth quarter was one of the more exciting times in recent rap memory. My bad. As the year approached its end, it seemed like every week brought another five-star heater, from **Clipse's** *Hell Hath No Fury* and **Project Pat's** *Crook By Da Book* to **Ghostface's** *More Fish* and **Nas' Hip-Hop Is Dead**, surely one of the best albums of 2006. Other highlights included **Papoose's** swift response to the Sean Bell shooting, "50 Shots," and, one of my favorite loose songs of the year, "The Roosevelts" by **DJ Muro** featuring **Ghostface, Trife,** and **Raekwon**.

For many, the most encouraging development was **Prodigy's** **Mobb Deep's** sudden return to form. As someone who spent his teenage years in New York in the mid-'90s, Mobb's *The Infamous* is near to my heart. But nearly everything Prodigy and Havoc have done recently has been just short of disgraceful. So P's "Mac 10 Handles" was a nice year-end surprise. If you're like most people, you were introduced to "Mac 10" (which is actually supposed to be a single from the upcoming **Alchemist**-produced mixtape/semi-official album, *Return of the Mac*) through the dark, *Taxi Driver*-inspired video that showed up on YouTube around Thanksgiving (another video for "New York Shim," which samples *Blacula* and is way better than Busta Rhymes' recent song of the same name, also appeared online). *Return of the Mac* is due out March 27 on Koch, and if these two joints and their videos are any indication, it is going to be to 2007 what the *We Got It for Cheap* mixtapes were to '05.

But enough about 2006. **Thes One's** *Lifestyle Marketing* (Tres) LP looks to be one of this year's more curious hip-hop creations: It's constructed entirely out of samples from an album of '70s commercial jingles by jazzman Herb Pilhofer. "Target" b/w "Grain Belt Beer" (Tres) offers a quick preview in the ultra-rare 10" format. These two instrumentals are so crisp, you'll be thirsty for more beats, not beer.

Coming straight out of Brooklyn like Larry Gilliard, Jr. is the **Large Professor**-affiliated production collective **Thisish**. Their *Thisish Vol. 1* is part mixtape, part beat tape, and part instrumental album with beats running the gamut from Large Pro-style bangers crying for a freestyle, to cold, alien tracks meant to stand alone. Expect to hear more from these guys soon.

On a lighter note, fresh off his hilarious HBO special *The Pimp Chronicles*, comedian **Katt Williams** is trying his hand at rap, with an upcoming LP due out through the Dipset. While the skits on his **Whoop Kid** mixtape *Pimpin Pimpin* are hilarious, his rhymes aren't pure comedy, though they don't stray too far from his topic of choice—pimping, of course.

It's too early to tell what ramifications of the RIAA's recent raid on **DJ Drama** and the Aphiliates Music Group will have on the mixtape scene, but they will certainly be huge. Once again, the RIAA—which is not a government agency but a private-sector trade organization—has demonstrated its inability to discriminate between criminal operations that illegally bootleg albums, and legitimate, artist-sanctioned mixtapes which are actually (free) promotional tools enjoyed by record labels. This misinformed assault on one of the few currently thriving methods of musical commerce will only further damage the ailing record industry.



**Down-beat Diaspora**  
By Rico "Superbizzee" Washington  
GETTING YOU UP ON THE SHARPEST SOUL, FUNK, AND R&B



Bob & Gene



4Hero

By now those shot glasses should have retired to the top shelf and the drunken choruses of "Auld Lang Syne" subsided, 'cause it's March—and time to get back to bidness! There's funk to be found and soul to behold! The first order of bidness is a grand round of congratulations to **J'Davey** on their signing to Warner Bros. Records. A year of pushin' the envelope towards the edge of the cliff with an avalanche of bootleg CD-Rs, incessant touring, and guest spots on albums by **The Roots, J Dilla,** and **4 Hero** has finally paid off. May your tenure be replete with debauchery and dope cuts.

By the way, that reminds me... UK ambassadors of drum & bass **4Hero** returns for the fifth time. Their latest joint, *Play With the Changes* (Raw Canvas), boasts their trademark sound, embellished with lush orchestration and some silky soul! Contributions from **Miss Jack Davey, Larry Mizell, Jody Watley, Lady Alma,** and **Darien Brockington** help elevate this jammin' affair to a new plateau. Check the air-tite rendition of the Stevie Wonder gem "Superwoman," featuring vocals by **Terry Devos**.

While we're in the UK, it's worth a damn to mention that **Jean-Paul "Bluey" Maunik** has just issued **Incognito's** twelfth studio album, the ethereal *Bees + Things + Flowers* (Narada Jazz). Don't be fooled by the track names. This ain't no greatest-hits requiem—this is an aural collage of four re-twerked Incognito classics; four adaptations of hits by **Earth, Wind & Fire, America, Lovin' Spoonful,** and **Roy Ayers** (hint: check the album title); and three brand-spankin'-new cuts. Oh, yeah... **Carleen Anderson, Maysa,** and venerable powerhouse diva **Jocelyn Brown** all lend their vocal chops to the acid jazz stew.

For all you vinyl junkies, Rhino recently snuck one under the radar. That *What It Is! Funky Soul & Rare Grooves 1967-1977* CD boxed set from my last column is now available on a limited-edition (5,000 copies) series of 25 seven-inch slabs. Do the long division: that's 50 cuts culled from the 91 on the CD version. But from a collector's standpoint,

the custom-designed 7" tote case and remastered vinyl may be worth the sacrifice.

Speaking of 7" tote cases, check out Daptone Records' new model on their website! If that don't float your boat, then dig their latest dusty find: the unreleased full-length project by Buffalo vocal duo **Bob & Gene** (a.k.a. a 15-year-old **Bobby "She's Just A Groupie" Nunn** and schoolmate Eugene Coplin). Recorded in Nunn's father's basement studio between 1967 and 1971, *If This World Were Mine...* is a 12-track trip down memory lane, when sweet street-corner harmony was the undisputed king of AM radio.

On December 25, 2006, we lost an extraordinary pioneer in rhythm and one of the prime architects of American music. His undeniable influence on all genres of American music will echo on forever. Though he left an incomparable body of work in soul and funk, let his legacy of social awareness continue to urge you to stay gettin' up, gettin' into it, and gettin' involved. **James Joseph Brown, Jr.** 1933-2006.

Swamini Turiyasngantanda, known to the world as the great **Alice Coltrane**, also made her metaphysical transition in January. As a fearless pioneer, Coltrane fused Indian musical modes with modern jazz. The breadth of her legacy will echo on in perpetuity.

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HILLS ARE ALIVE IN REGGAE MUSIC



## Lucky 13 By Toph One

TophOne can be heard every Wednesday at the Red Wine Social at Dalva, and every Thursday at White Label at Milk in S.F.



Weird Fish



Sacred Hoop



The Photo Photo by Strawberry

There must have been something in the air last year—all of a sudden four of my best brothers and sisters all have wrinkly new raisins living in their homes. Better than me, as I can barely keep my head above water sometimes. Plus, I'll take a hot 40-year-old chick who'll listen to The Pogues and bike 100 miles with me any day over a life of domestic bliss. Some of us just aren't cut out for parenthood. But much love to Niah Zuri, Wesley, Young Bubba, 5-2, and all the new young 'uns who'll one day be spoon-feeding us our Soylent Green. Hopefully we'll all have grown gills by then, 'cause they'll be selling us seaside property in Colorado.

### 1. CHUCK WOMACK & THE SWEET SOULS "HAMHOCKS & BEANS (QUANTIC REMIX)" Dis-Joint/US/12

Of course, Quantic hits it hard with his remix, but *man*, the original on the flip is funky beyond belief (those drums!). Either way, you've got a winner here.

### 2. MUALLEM MUTATIONS 2 Compost/GER/12EP

Singer Shawn Lee puts so much soul into the Phreek Plus One remix that I have a hard time leaving the house without it. Italian Cosmic Albatross Bounce all the way. Love it!

### 3. THE PONYS TURN THE LIGHTS OUT Matador/US/CD

And then sometimes you just need to rock the fuck out. Fuzzy, shaggy-headed garage rock for fans of Velvet Underground, The Jesus & Mary Chain, and Lux Interior. From "Double Vision" all the way to "Pickpocket Song," these Chicago cats get the job done on their third album (and first for Matador).

### 4. ATARILOGIC & ALASKA WESTWIND THIS IS TEA Tonedef Systems/US/CD

Speaking of the fabled Midwest Funkzone, producer Atari & MC Alaska present a full platter of heavy beats and solid rhymes to represent Indiana to the world. Check "Godspeed" and the monster "Mister" and you will be hooked.

### 5. SACRED HOOP GO HOGWILD The Hoop/US/CD

The drunken godfathers of Bay Area (worldwide?) dirt-rap, Palo Alto's Sacred Hoop drops their long-awaited new disc, and it's full of all the bass-drenched, foul-mouthed brilliance we've come to expect from them over the years. Z-Man, Eddie K, and fellow Gulp City dweller TopR are at the party, too, so wear your drinking hat.

### 6. BLACK BISHOP "HARD TIMES" S.O.D./US/7

Drums to die for, and two sides of serious low-rider soul from '66 to spice up that drab set.

### 7. JAMIROQUAI "RUNAWAY" Epic/US/12

I once vowed never to review Jamiroquai because lead singer Jay Kay always struck me as such an egotistical pretty-boy, but I'm really digging the Grant Nelson mix because a) it's instrumental, and b) it's fucking great disco!

### 8. CONFESSIONS OF A BURNING MAN Windline Films/US/DVD

This crew took a great idea and made a pretty damn good documentary about a group of virgins experiencing the highs and lows of Burning Man for the first time. They've got *Straight Outta Hunters Point* filmmaker Kevin Epps doing yoga on the playa with L.A. oil heir-ess Anna Getty! Props for that, plus great outtakes and a haunting

soundtrack by ex-*XL88R* scribe Darkhorse on 3\*60 Records.

### 9. ALOE BLACC "GET DOWN" B/W "WITH MY FRIENDS" Plug/US/12

Jazzed-up goodness from the multi-talented Aloe, backed by up-and-coming producers Kero One and King Most. Feel-good tracks with tons of keys and flava.

### 10. BLACK MILK BROKEN WAX Music House/US/12EP

Black Milk shows his heavy Detroit licks on tracks like "Pressure" and "Keep It Live," but the finest moment on this EP is the Slum Village-feeling of "U's a Freak Bitch." Bad ass.

### 11. LIVE HUMAN BREAKSEVEN (REMIXES) Cosmic/US/CD

The self-described "Iron Chef of break records" is just that—well, kinda... they're a gang of super-talented battle DJs armed with the same palette of sounds and allowed to do what they please. It's basically a freestyle (re)mixtape, and it's pretty fucking amazing, with illness from Vrse Murphy (Sacred Hoop), the Fingerbangerz, Circus DJs, Ben Stokes (Tino Corp), and DJ Oaty Love.

### 12. GRAND SUPREME "MICROPHONE FIEND" Bastard Jazz/US/7

Grand Supreme and the ol' Hydroponic Soundsystem team up for a rub-a-dub version of the Erik B & Rakim classic, with smokily satisfying results.

### LUCKY 13) WEIRD FISH San Francisco/restaurant

Three cheers for my man, my fish monger Shaggy Manatee and his new, funky, affordable fish shack in the Mission! Try the Suspicious Fish, and tell 'em Toph sent ya.

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James Murphy of LCD Soundsystem



## IN THE STUDIO: LCD SOUNDSYSTEM

The DFA mastermind talks about jazz drums, string quartets, and being the best LCD cover band on the planet.

WORDS: KEN TAYLOR PHOTO: DUSTIN ROSS

Some might say that James Murphy leads two lives: frontman of the disco-friendly LCD Soundsystem, and mixmaster behind the DFA production duo, who has given everyone from The Rapture to Nine Inch Nails a flattering sonic facelift. But whether it's making underground dance hits like "Losing My Edge" or brushing up Top 40 fare, it's Murphy's straight-ahead work ethic that keeps him sane—and one of the most in-demand producers and remixers in the game. Here he lets us in on the process of recording LCD Soundsystem's sophomore disc, *Sound of Silver*.

### DO YOU APPROACH YOUR RECORDING SESSIONS LIKE A 9-TO-5?

No, because my job changes so much. I'll be on tour for a couple of years and that'll be a full-time job, and then I'll be focused on label stuff for a while, or remixes, or DJing. It goes through phases. Nothing's ever routinized, which is really nice but really taxing. Though, when making [*Sounds of Silver*], we did the last 35 days straight, at about 10-14 hours a day. But it was pretty sane—I wasn't, like, running around like a crazy person.

### DO YOU BRING IN OUTSIDE ENGINEERS FOR YOUR LCD SOUNDSYSTEM STUFF?

No. When I went to the [Long View] Farm Studio in Massachusetts—for the first half of the work on the record—there's an engineer there named Ian who's there to interface with the house. But I don't need an engineer. I'm a pretty full-blown engineer, but I always have a programmer/assistant, Eric [Broucek], who does all the DFA stuff. When Tim [Goldsworthy] and I are working, he assists us both.

### WHAT'S THE MOST PERSONAL THING YOU'VE GOT IN YOUR STUDIO?

I don't really think in those terms with the studio... [but] I have a set of 1957 Gretsch jazz drums that are what we record everything with, and they sound astonishing. There's just no way to tune them or mic them to make them sound bad, which makes drum recording much easier. And there's an old Epiphone bass that I use that has no name, from the '60s, that I've recorded everything with through an old Ampeg Portaflex B-15 flip-top bass amp. Basically bass is always the Epiphone into the Portaflex.

### WAS THERE A TIME WHEN YOU WERE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH RECORDING YOUR OWN VOCALS?

I'm still uncomfortable! There's never been a time when I wasn't uncomfortable. It's horrifying. I kick everybody out, pretty much.

### AT THE END OF THE FIRST TRACK, ARE THOSE ACTUALLY REAL STRINGS?

I got a string quartet to arrange with, which I think was a very interesting experience for them. They try to get as much jammed in as they can, and they're kinda [used to being] treated like animals to a certain degree. And my thing was like, "I want some strings on the record and I'm not sure what. I have to hear it and see what fits. So I don't have anything prewritten and I'm gonna have to write things on the spot." And they kinda looked at me like, "You know, we're not jazz musicians. We don't just, like, play. You have to really write stuff down." We actually got into all this microtonal stuff, and it was really fun to work that stuff out on the piano and have to break it up into different voicings, because I've never done that... And I like waste—and that was a big waste.

### HOW DO THE SONGS TYPICALLY COME TOGETHER?

It really depends. Like, on "Get Innocuous," obviously that beat that starts everything is what started the track. Originally that beat was just made out of a bunch of sounds from a Yamaha CS60; those are all just a series of kick drums with the synth, and making the snares and sampling them. I like making kinda wonky beat loops and programming them without a grid so that they feel more liquid and they're much easier to play to. Grid-y things are really difficult to play to 'cause they don't adjust for a sample being late in the attack. And I did stuff with the modular synth—I think it was probably the Moog Taurus being controlled with my Korg SQ10 modular sequencer—just doing a drum-machine-and-synth take and then going and playing drums live to it. I'm more intuitive than I am thoughtful. I prefer to go play and then when I'm bored playing something, it usually lines up with when it's time to change.

### IS IT GOING TO BE HARD TO MOVE FROM STUDIO TO STAGE WITH THIS RECORD?

No, not at all. We're a cover band when it's time to go live. And we're the best LCD cover band on the planet. So we're just gonna go and try and figure out what that other band did in the studio, and see how it can be translated live without being too obsessive about it.

*Sound of Silver* is out March 20 on Capitol Records. [www.lcdsoundsystem.com](http://www.lcdsoundsystem.com)



In LCD Soundsystem's studio (from left to right): EMS Synthi-A, Ampeg Portaflex B-15, Apple Logic Pro



## ARTIST TIPS: HENRIK SCHWARZ

Henrik Schwarz's latest mix disc, part of the venerable *IK7 DJ-Kicks* series, isn't quite what you might expect from the man who's been redefining tech-house for the past couple of years. Instead, he folds together Moondog's bop-jazz classic "Bird's Lament" with Double's low-slung house jam "Woman of the World" and carries on through tracks from iD, James Brown, and Pharoah Sanders while injecting moments of electro-tech greatness from Drexciya and Rob Hood with aplomb. How does he do it? Here are the Berliner's five steps to creating a killer DJ mix. *Ken Taylor*



Photo by Paul Hearfield

### 1. HAVE AN IDEA

In my opinion, if you want to do something special you've got to have an idea. When I did the *DJ-Kicks* mix, I had the idea to combine the sounds of soul, funk, jazz, and techno or house with some additional production from the computer to be able to melt the different styles together much more than would have been possible with two turntables. However, I didn't want to do one of those ultra-perfect computer mixes—they can get a bit boring sometimes.

### 2. THE MUSIC

Before you start mixing, select the best music you can, of course. The result should be a selection that is powerful and soft, loud and silent, fast and slow, analog and digital, minimal and maximal, warm and cold, new and old.

### 3. THE MIX

Of course, the selection is very important but even more important, for me, is the way you combine two pieces. If you choose the right combination, you create something powerful and new. Sometimes it just sounds great, however sometimes you can feel a whole universe within the interspaces of the two tracks. I like the space that opens up in between.

### 4. INTUITION

I think music is something that you can think and talk about a lot, but in the end you just cannot describe it in words or get it under control with the power of your brain. When it comes to music, making a plan is good but the [ability to] bring the right things together comes from somewhere else. Music comes from where we all come from.

### 5. THE PEOPLE

Finally, I believe that music is a connection machine. It brings people together. A new piece of music or even a mix CD can bring different people together. The more, the better; one from here, another one from the other side of the world.



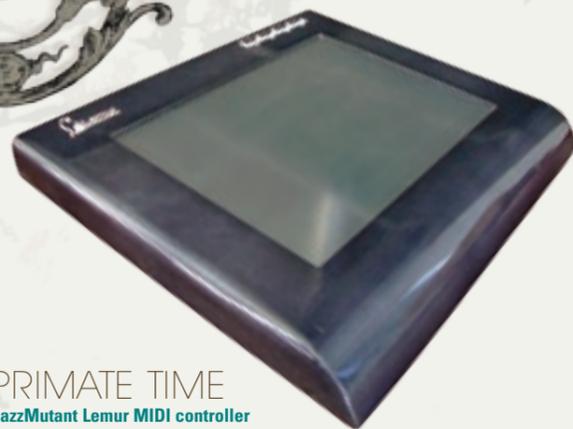
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## PRIMATE TIME

**JazzMutant Lemur MIDI controller**  
**MSRP: \$2695; www.cycling74.com**

For those of you who haven't heard, MIDI has a jealous cousin from the future—the **JazzMutant Lemur**. Utilizing OSC (open sound control) and DHCP technology (connecting to software via ethernet), this LCD touchscreen labyrinth is enough to make the Kaoss Pad look like a device from the '70s. Don't get too carried away, though. Unless you've got a mass of time on your hands, the Lemur is no easy beast to tame. Not only do you have to (intuitively) master the JazzEditor software bundled within, but you also have to develop familiarity with connecting the customizable OSC hardware messages to your software—not necessarily plug-and-play territory. All technical difficulties aside, the Lemur is easily the most limitless hardware controller available (absolutely killer for Ableton Live). You just have to dedicate yourself to configuring the endless parameters and capabilities of this primate gift from the future. *Fred Miketa*



THE MOUSE IS DEAD. LONG LIVE THE FADER!

## OF MICE AND MACHINES

**PreSonus FaderPort Software Transport Controller**  
**MSRP: \$199; www.presonus.com**

The mouse, useful as it is, was originally designed to point and click, not to push virtual sliders and draw in curves. What an overworked and unqualified little rodent! Thankfully, he can go back to browser duty: faders have finally arrived to desktop recording. The sturdy, compact **FaderPort** is a USB-connected automation and transport controller that sports a touch-sensitive, motorized fader that is smooth, tactile, and moves just like the real thing. Use it to set levels or write single and group channel automations. There's also a panning knob and dedicated buttons for most crucial recording functions, including forward/rewind, play, pause, record-enable, punch, loop, undo, mute, and solo. Channels, including the main output, are easily selectable. There are buttons to switch between the mixing, project, and transport views of the many supported host sequencers, and even a user-assignable button. The mouse is dead. Long live the fader! *Roger Thomasson*



## MMMM, DONUT

**JBL Radial iPod Docking Speaker System**  
**MSRP: \$299; www.jbl.com**

Few iPod docking systems look as cool as the JBL's **Radial**, and fortunately that's not all this one has got going for it. Like most JBL products, it's got superior sound quality, and for its size, the 60 watts contained nicely within this circular configuration of four aluminum-domed drivers provide quite a blast. You might find the dock itself a little wobbly when holding the iPod (not to worry—it's protected by the radial shape), but why ever touch the unit anyway, when you've got a tiny RF remote? (Its controls are kind of lackluster, but it does the trick with a little learning.) The Radial is a tad pricy considering how many competitive iPod docking systems are on the market, but it's by and large one of the nicest we've heard. *Ken Taylor*



POLISHING A TURD HAS NEVER BEEN SO EFFORTLESS.

## MASTER BLASTER

**Creative Labs Xmod MP3 Enhancer**  
**MSRP: \$79.99; www.creative.com**

While the advent of the MP3 has helped your music collection multiply like so many protozoa, it has also allowed the quality of said music to suffer considerably. Enter Creative Labs' **Xmod**, which uses two mechanisms to make the compressed choons on your computer sound better: CMSS 3D adds a subtle surround effect (better for watching movies, really), while the Crystalizer up-converts music to 24-bit audio, filling in the gaps in lower and higher frequencies lost during compression. Bass is punchier, lows and highs are improved, and music simply sounds nicer. It's also a seamless setup: plug this thing into your USB port and you're ready to go, no software required. Polishing a turd has never been so effortless. *Evan Shamoon*



LIQUID MIX GETS IT RIGHT.

## LIQUID LIQUID

**FocusRite Liquid Mix**  
**MSRP: \$1099; www.focusrite.com**

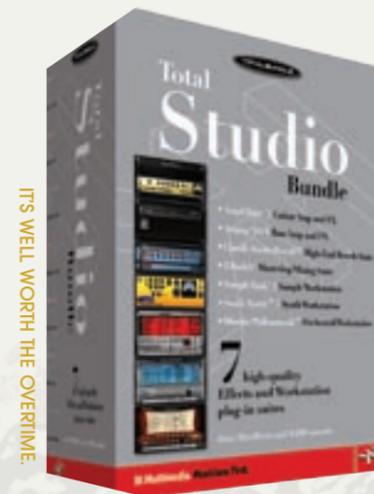
Hardware-powered DSP plug-ins are a great way to take a load off of your processor, especially if your sequences tend to get a little track-heavy. Focusrite's most recent addition to the genre shakes things up a little bit—the **Liquid Mix**, a collection of classic compressors and EQs, comes complete with its own dedicated control surface. All the settings of the 60-plus emulations can be tweaked right from the 11-knob, 14-button, book-sized Firewire box. The plug-ins themselves sound fantastic, and a quick manual check reveals the sources of the unlicensed emulations: classic units like the Fairchild 670 and the Neve 33609. Unfortunately, there aren't any fancy emulated VU meters or vintage styling—every plug-in uses the same relatively bland-looking GUI. But at the end of the day, sound and usability reign supreme, and the Liquid Mix gets it right on both counts. *Roger Thomasson*



## X-FACTOR

**Logitech X-540 Speaker System**  
**MSRP: \$99.99; www.logitech.com**

For desktop speakers, the **X-540s** pack plenty of thump. Fusing FDD technology (dual drivers that eliminate uneven sound fields) into a six-speaker set, Logitech ensures that gamers and bedroom rockers alike can enjoy all 140 watts of desktop fury. Aside from the insane surround sound that you get from these otherwise average-looking speakers, the X-540s also come equipped with a remote station for volume, EQ, and headphone out, just in case your neighbors are as sensitive to the sub as mine seem to be. The only drawback lies in the matrix of cords that you have to rummage through in order to connect and configure. Otherwise, the air-fueled subwoofer, satellite speaker stands, and overall sonic power make this set a serious treat for the hard-hitting side of my collection—downstairs neighbors be damned. *Fred Miketa*

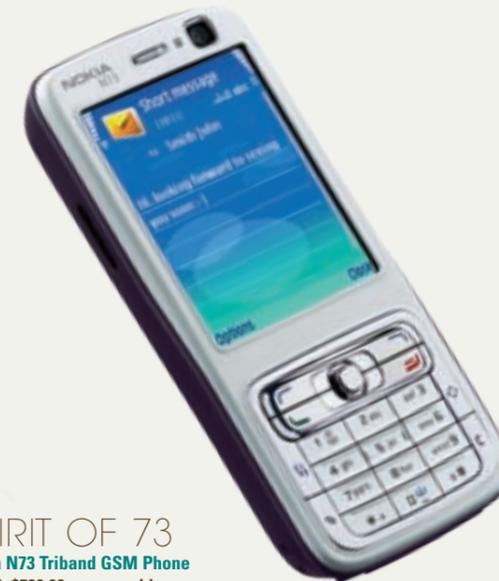


IT'S WELL WORTH THE OVERTIME.

## JUST ADD SEQUENCER

**IK Multimedia Total Studio Plug-in Bundle**  
**MSRP: \$1199; www.ikmultimedia.com**

If you're looking for a comprehensive set of studio tools, grab IK Multimedia's **Total Studio** bundle. For starters, AmpliTube 2, the newest iteration of the award-winning guitar amp modeler, is fast becoming a classic. On the low end, Ampeg SVX provides admirable emulations of four beloved Ampeg bass heads and six cabs. Miroslav Philharmonic is a 7GB port of the legendary Miroslav Orchestra and Choir sample library, which, with a \$4000 tag, was historically confined to pro studios. SampleTank 2.1 XL and Sonik Synth 2 form a comprehensive sample-based workstation with an exhaustive library (nearly 15GB) of samples and patches. Classik Studio Reverb is a highly regarded reverb collection with Plate, Room, Hall, and Inverse units, and T-RackS is an acclaimed analog-modeled mastering suite with high-quality compressors, limiters, and EQs. Sure, \$1200 is lofty, but considering the number of quality plug-ins, it's well worth the overtime. *Roger Thomasson*



## SPIRIT OF 73

**Nokia N73 Triband GSM Phone**  
**MSRP: \$529.99; www.nokia.com**

Nokia has a ridiculously ambitious release schedule—by the time you read this, the **N73** will likely be replaced by something smaller, smarter, and faster. For now, it's a nifty addition to their lineup, and features some high-quality gadgetry. The built-in music player is a great starter, expandable up to 1GB via miniSD card, and comes with interactive radio capabilities. But the gem is the N73's 3.2-megapixel camera with Carl Zeiss glass. It's housed beneath a smart sliding cover, so you can safely toss it in your pocket with your keys. In fact, its resolution is so high that it yields 8"x10" prints—revolutionary in the world of cell phone cams. Alternately, it's a snap to share pics or send to your Flickr page with one keystroke via Nokia's XpressShare program. The phone's only downside? Slightly bulky, and a tight keypad. *Will Tobin*

## VIS-ED: BURLESQUE DESIGN

A HEADBANGING, EIGHT-HEADED GRAPHIC DESIGN MONSTER ARISES FROM THE MIDWEST.

WORDS VIVIAN HOST IMAGES BURLESQUE



LEFT: *Love It or Like It*

The first thought that comes to mind when you hear the word “burlesque” is probably some half-naked ladies dancing cabaret-style. While a fraction of Burlesque’s design does dabble in ass ‘n’ titties (we’ll talk about Todd Bratrud later), “burlesque” also means to “ridicule by means of grotesque exaggeration or comic imitation” (thank you Merriam-Webster!), which is probably as good a description as any for this crew’s collective sense of humor.

The Minneapolis, MN outfit grew out of the ashes of *Life Sucks Die*, a graffiti-music-porn-and-more ‘zine. Eventually bawdy humor and late nights stealing copies from Kinko’s were put on the back burner for busy graphic design and poster-making schedules, and in autumn of 2003 Burlesque was officially born.

The eight-headed design outfit now consists of multiple personalities and styles: the ornate fantasy worlds of Aaron Horkey; Mike Davis’ eye-popping vector

steetz; Todd Bratrud’s iconic skateboard designs; and the poster talents of screenprinting powerhouse Wes Winship, among them. The octet’s work has helped define the look of underground hip-hop—with covers and tour posters for the likes of Rhymesayers, Anticon, and Stones Throw—as well as metal (see designs for bands like Sunn O))) and Pelican). In September of last year, Burlesque took yet another step, opening a gallery called First Amendment with friends Lonny Unitus and Amy Jo Hendrikson; a poster show of member Harmen Liemburg’s work and a group show from Swedish clothing brand WeSC are forthcoming.

Of course, the crew hasn’t *really* lost their sense of humor; check Bratrud’s and Thompson’s blog ([lordsofapathy.blogspot.com](http://lordsofapathy.blogspot.com)), their “Life Sucks” mini-golf course for the Walker Art Center, or the interview below for evidence.

[www.burlesquedesign.com](http://www.burlesquedesign.com), [www.firstamendmentarts.com](http://www.firstamendmentarts.com)

RIGHT: Burlesque exclusive for XLR8R Vis-Ed





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE  
 Pelican tour poster  
 Zebulon Pike tour poster  
 Chrome Children tour poster  
 The Minnesota Twins  
 DJ Day Got to Get it Right CD artwork

**What projects are you most proud of?**

**Mike Davis:** "Thrill Me to the Marrow" art print; DJ Day *Got to Get it Right* EP artwork; Stones Throw's Chrome Children tour poster.

**Wes Winship:** The whole Arcade Fire poster series, Belles of Skin City CD art, the print shop, and our current studio/gallery space. Also getting to do so much work with Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson and the whole Sunn O)))/Southern Lord phenomenon.

**We know you are huge Black Sabbath fans. What is the most listened-to Sabbath album in the Burlesque office?**

**Mike:** I think we listen to things that sound like Black Sabbath more often than actual Black Sabbath: Goatsnake, Pentagram, Witchcraft. What the fuck? Wes, why aren't we listening to the first Sabbath album non-stop? But there are definitely situations that call for specific songs to get cued up on iTunes. Like when some goofy shit happens, I like to play the *Benny Hill* theme song super-loud. Or when someone talks about someone else's ass, I play Trina's "Pull Over."



**Wes:** We really should rip the entire Black Sabbath Ozzy-era catalog to MP3. I'm pretty sure massive headbanging and rock stances ensue whenever they get played. Mike also sings along in a really high-pitched voice that sounds nothing like Ozzy.

**What did you learn from doing *Life Sucks Die* that you still use today?**

**Mike:** People still think pictures of animals and doo-doo and porn are funny... 'cause they are!

**Wes:** How to put too much stuff on one page because you're paying for it yourself! I'm still trying to unlearn that so I can work with negative space. Also, if something seems like it's such a powerful idea that somebody somewhere is going to get pissed off, if you hesitate for a second, then you should just go ahead and do it anyway. The fallout is usually far less worse than living with regret.

**What is your favorite thing in your office?**

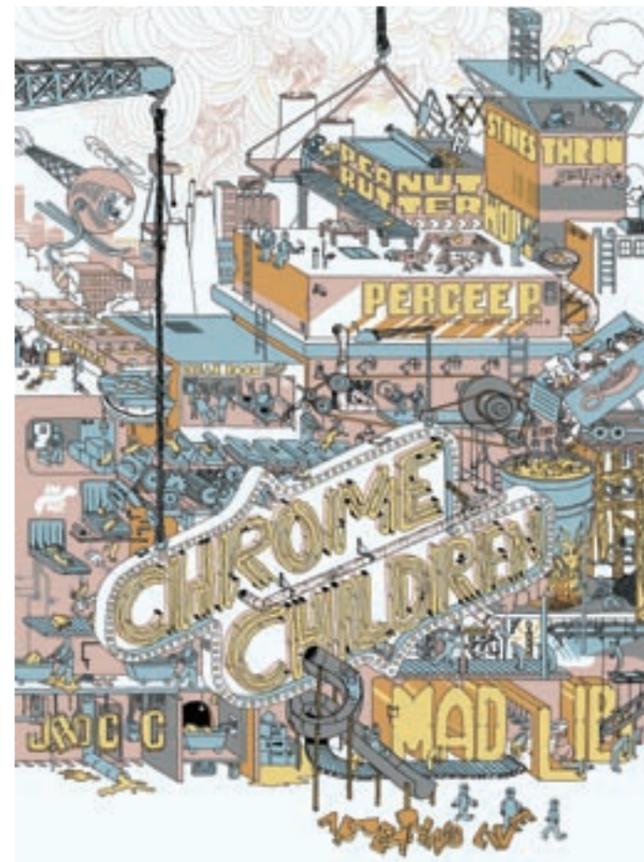
**Letta Christianson:** I'm completely in love with the new cutter. So slick! Beyond that, probably the huge, three-sided, light-up pot leaf rigged to drop from the ceiling à la the ball in Times Square on NYE. I love that Wes (*It was George, actually-Wes*) came up with that for Dre Day 2006, and that it totally didn't faze Wes' dad at all that we asked him to build it. Now it just lives up on a shelf, reminding us that it's almost Dre Day 2007.

**Mike:** O.P.P. (other people's posters)

**Wes:** The water cooler.

**You work with a lot of Minneapolis DJs, labels, and small businesses. Is it important to do local stuff or is this just your "bread & butter"?**

**Mike:** I think it's super-important to support one's local scene. Being in Minneapolis, we're very fortunate to be surrounded by a whole bunch of great rock groups, rap groups, DJs, poster







CLOCKWISE  
FROM ABOVE:  
Melvins poster  
Pin Up  
Pink  
Blacklisted Heart

artists, party people, and just all-around good folks who support what we do just as we support them.

**Wes:** I like working with people and for things, groups, and artists that I like. It makes me care about what I produce for them rather than just churning something out. I also want our own stuff to be strong enough to stand on its own, not sitting under the shadow of some big name band or brand.

**What does everyone who works at Burlesque have in common?**

**Mike:** Before we started getting a bunch of new printer-helpers and interns, just about all of us were straight-edge. We all like skateboarding.

**Wes:** We're mostly drug-free. We all wrote graffiti at one point, except Letta. We all like Johnny Cash. We all think that *The Chronic* is one of the best albums ever made. None of us really know how to "party" the way most people do. I think it means to throw your life away for a while.

**What have you been listening to in the office?**

**Mike:** *Dreidel Day*, a 15-minute mix of Israeli funk and disco that I put together in celebration of Chanukah; DJ Ayres & Tittsworth *Ayres 'n' Titties*, an awesome, high-powered Baltimore club mix; Dr. Delay's *Rajaz Meter*, a crazy mix my dude in NYC hooked up of Turkish psych and funk. The new Brother Ali album, which is awesome.



**Wes:** Melvins, Pig Destroyer, Urgehal, The Mummies, Harvey Milk, the new Big Business, anything with the Gaz break.

**What was the last argument you had?**

**Mike:** How to make our plastic, spring-loaded toy boxing glove that extends and makes this "boi-oi-oi-oi-ing" sound when you push the button even longer so you can wamp people with it from like 10 feet away. Oh, and how I got Wes the wong kind of cheese at the gwocewy store. Waaaaaaaah.

**Wes:** Were you even listening to me? I wanted sandwich fixings for multiple sandwiches. I have a whole loaf of bread. What am I supposed to do with a single slice of cheese and two pieces of lettuce? That will hold me for about 10 minutes.

**Mike:** Uhhhh, because every time I buy you more than a half-serving of food, it ends up sitting out on the table stinking up the gallery for days on end. If you just ate meat like a regular person, I could have gotten you a real sandwich and not some dumb ingredients for your dumb hippie lunch you fucking punk-rock-acid-rapper-hippie-raver.

**Wes:** I'm pulling another print all-nighter! I'm going to need more than one serving of food! Mr. Meat-and-taters here doesn't know how to take a list to the grocery store and pick up the items on said list!



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Photographie Miguel Legault

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# POUNING THE PAVEMENT

INDUSTRIAL ICONS EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN USE EVERYTHING FROM POWER TOOLS TO WEBCASTS TO CHANGE THE MEANING OF MUSIC.

After listening to Einstürzende Neubauten's early records, other industrial bands seem fluffy in comparison. During the 1980s, the band risked bone and skin to perform literal "industrial" music with drills, jackhammers, car springs, metal sheets, and whatever trash was lying around their West Berlin hometown. Frontman Blixa Bargeld took his cue from hearing "tribal" music, and speculating on what music arising from an industry-polluted, Cold War-split habitat *should* sound like. EN then embarked on a two-decade long journey to tear up the boundaries between music and noise, and they continue to influence industrial and post-techno artists to this day. Bassist Alex Hacke spoke to us about the band's history and its current fascination with releasing albums (and works-in-progress) on the web.

### Where do you live now?

We live in Wedding, which is an old-school West Berlin proletarian area. No tourists and no yuppies up here.

### What was Einstürzende Neubauten's original mission?

One motto at the time was to expand the term "music" [until] everything becomes music, hence nothing is music.

### What is the significance of using industrial tools and pieces of metal as musical instruments?

Giving a new meaning to an object of profane use is rewarding. Pieces of metal are already pretty loud un-amplified, and obviously a lot cheaper than traditional instruments.

### You joined the band as a teenager. What did your parents and peers think?

I managed, at an early age, to get involved with people who would share my vision and philosophy. My parents eventually had to just accept the fact that I wanted to become a musician. In a way, they were relieved, though, that I actually did have an idea of what [I wanted] to do with my life.

### What were some of your favorite places to record in Berlin?

The legendary Hansa Studio, an abandoned water tower, the hollow of a motorway overpass, and many more unlikely places.

### How did living in West Berlin in the early '80s affect your band's artistic outlook and music?

It was a very fertile time for experiments, besides the fact that everything was a lot cheaper then. I was proud of being born and raised in a city whose other half was a restricted area.

### Tell me about Einstürzende Neubauten's current project.

We are currently in phase three of the supporter-[driven] project on [www.neubauten.org](http://www.neubauten.org). For the third time around, we are producing an album with the help of the so-called "supporters." [They] donate a one-time fee and in return receive an exclusive version of the finished product in the mail. [They] are able to observe the making of the record via webcasts, get their own email address, and converse with us and among themselves in web forums. In addition, we provide 12 monthly downloads of one piece [to create] an entirely separate album.

Einstürzende Neubauten's first concert DVD, *Palast der Republik*, is out now.

[www.neubauten.org](http://www.neubauten.org)

Words Cameron Macdonald

Illustration Eric Baldwin ([busyandbusy.com](http://busyandbusy.com))

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